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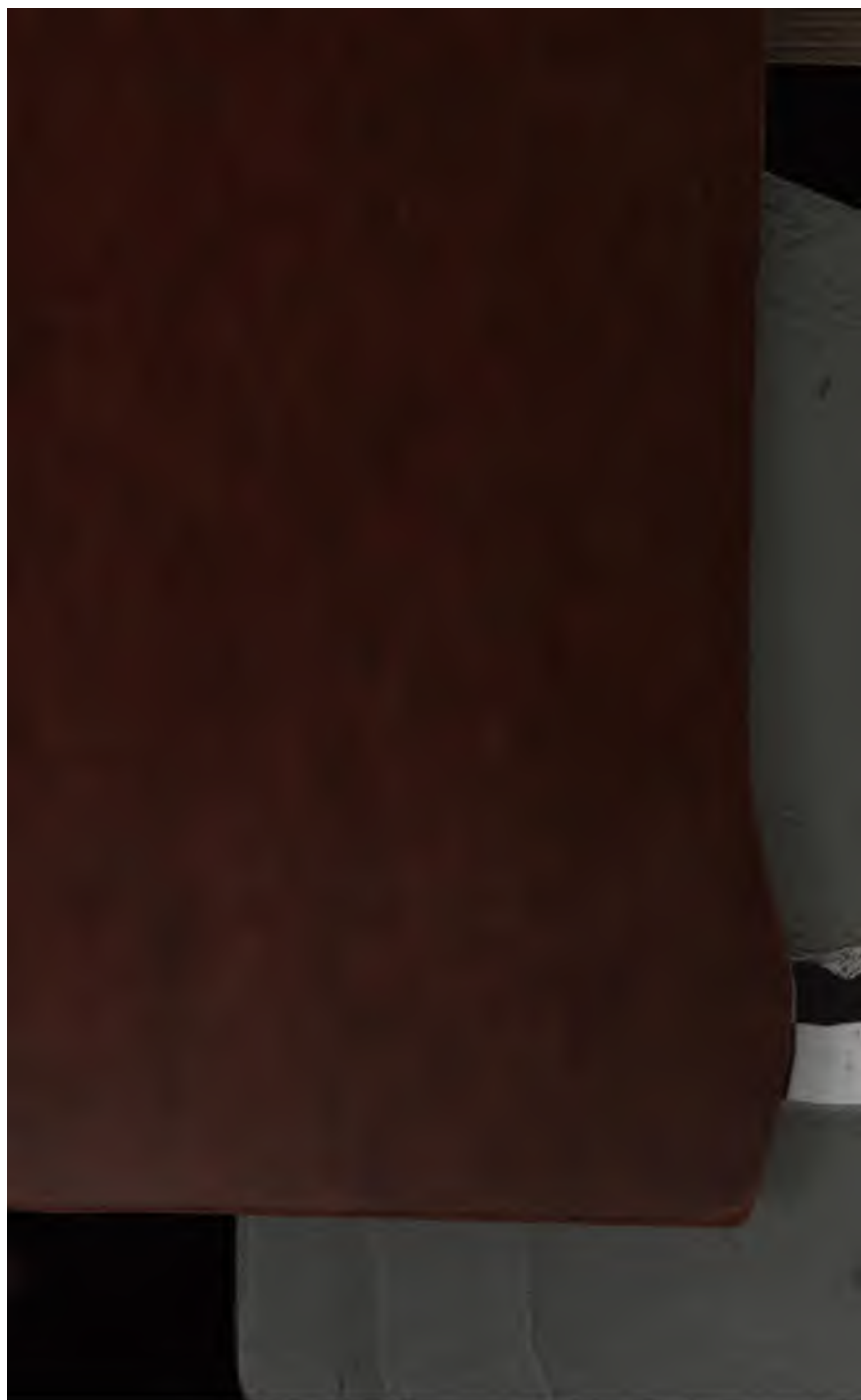


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THE NEW MORALITY

BY

GEOFFREY MORTIMER

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THE NEW MORALITY

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF MORALITY

BEFORE man was, the rudimentary sense of morality existed among animals. During the pre-scientific stages of human thought, the beasts that perish were regarded with contempt, and the possession of reasoning capacity was denied to them. It is true that certain animals were looked upon with superstitious reverence; but it was long ere men began to trace a crude sense of right and wrong back to their lowly companions of the earth. Pleasure and pain men shared with the brutes, and in mere physical sensation mankind acknowledged a kinship with all breathing creatures. Yet men failed to realise that "the tribal conscience," that safeguard of the individual and the community, which experience fostered, had its analogue in the display of sympathy and mutual protection afforded by gregarious animals.

The sentinel bird that braves death before deserting its post, the feeble herb-eating mammal that defends its helpless young with supreme courage against the attack of the deadly carnivore, the dignified and magnanimous dog that patiently endures the menaces

and the affronts of a smaller and weaker dog, the willing horse that, without the lash, strains every sinew in drawing the master's load—these instance qualities which savour too strongly of morality to be dismissed without reflection upon their origin. Love, sympathy, bravery, patience, and fidelity are virtues highly evolved in the dog, and these spring from a developed brain and reasoning power. The instinct of self-preservation becomes an altruistic and reasoned action in such an instance as that recounted by Darwin, when an old ape at much peril fought single-handed with dogs that were worrying a young ape.

The necessity for morality forced itself upon the intelligence of the first human communities. Regard for the dictates of "the tribal conscience" was inevitable, for without moral ideas no tribe could exist, no community could prosper and survive. Man's sense of right and wrong, which has filled the philosopher's mind with awe, is a natural law. Its sanction is in reason and experience; its rate of evolution is in proportion to men's capacity for exercising reason, and benefiting by the teaching of experience.

At a very early stage in man's history, right and wrong became personified or embodied in spiritual beings; but there was a period when the gods of good and evil were unknown, and men were devoid of the religious yearning. The idea of causality is not inborn; it comes through experience, and in the day-dawn of religion man believed that even the stones were animate. He had not yet learned to account for the mysterious manifestations of nature as the work of a supernatural being or deity. The first great problem was the stern fact of death, and, finding it

hard to acknowledge this strange cessation of life as natural, primitive man conceived that in his being there were two parts—a bodily and a spiritual. Hence arose supernatural belief, and the theory of the existence of soul or immortal essence, though for ages men believed that souls existed in a material form upon earth after death, and that they experienced physical desires and needs.

When we reflect with what difficulty many persons in civilised countries understand the laws of causation in respect of quite simple phenomena, we may readily apprehend how savage minds naturally resorted to supernatural explanations when confronted by the mysteries of life and death. The evil and the suffering of existence were thus ascribed to the influence of spirits. One primitive brain conceived the idea that a bad spirit urged men to such anti-social acts as slaying or robbing within the tribe, while famine and pestilence were attributed to the ill-will of a super-human being. It was difficult to explain the good and evil forces in the world. Dread succeeded the animistic belief that man shared life with trees and rocks, and men began to quail at the voice of enraged gods when thunder reverberated among the hills. But the great spirit was not always wrathful. He gave the sunshine and shower and increase of the fruits of the earth; he shed joys and blessings, and men learned to adore as well as to fear.

From these beginnings sprang the great faiths of the world. Religion took morality into its protection, and until to-day it claims to be the source of moral aspiration and rectitude of conduct. It is with the morality of Christian theologians that we are at

present chiefly concerned, for most of us have been reared in the faith of Christianity, in a nation wherein that creed is supported by the State. We are taught in the home and the school that the faith of our fathers is the only true religion, the only basis of true morality. It is with the morality of part of the established religion that I propose to deal.

The Church, as the founder and the protector of the Old Morality, is more freely criticised to-day than at any period in its history. From within, as well as from without, its tenets and dogmas are examined and discussed at the bar of human reason. It is, therefore, no presumption nowadays on the part of any thoughtful and honest inquirer if he essays to controvert the doctrines which reason and experience condemn as immoral. Protestantism accords to its adherents the right of judgment in matters spiritual, and permits diverse interpretations of the Scriptures. To-day, within the Church of England, the clergy differ among themselves even in regard to the "fundamentals," while upon minor questions there is a very wide disagreement. Nonconformists repudiate certain dogmas of the Church, and dissent from the dissent of their co-religionists. The spirit of doubt and unbelief, essential to moral progress, has more or less permeated every sect. Universalists, who believe in a hope of salvation for all men, impugn the teaching of Calvinism that only the few are chosen; and the neo-Christians of the "broader" denominations explain away the mystical element of Christianity until nothing remains but a theism, often of a nebulous character, and a veneration for Jesus Christ as the noblest example of humanity. Educated Churchmen who no longer assert the historical veracity of the

Bible are not condemned as heretics; they continue to hold high office in the Church, and large sums of money are subscribed by Christians to further the higher Biblical criticism. Amid these signs of the times the Rationalist does not find himself in the position of a forlorn unbeliever, avowing heresy to a hostile audience. Tolerance and a desire to know the truth are growing apace throughout Christendom, and the old theology and the Old Morality are giving place to the New.

Notwithstanding the great advance in Biblical criticism and the scientific study of religions, the mass of the people still profess allegiance to the creeds of the ancient world. The Evangelical Christian, who believes that doubt is sinful and inquiry impious, is not influenced deeply by the discovery of Professor Schmiedel that "the really trustworthy texts in the four Gospels must be reduced to nine, five of which are the only proper foundations for a 'Life of Jesus.'" In a measure, the defender of primitive Christian beliefs must be influenced by all dicta of high authority within the pale of Christianity; but the influence is mostly exhibited by a stern refusal to heed one word of "the higher criticism." He has, during the course of his religious experience, sometimes deemed it right to doubt and disbelieve certain doctrines which are accepted by his fellow Christians as matters of vital moment. But his desire for truth is not sufficiently powerful to lead him further from tradition. He has grown to love a creed more than the truth. And this is the attitude of an immense number of orthodox believers in England and America. Let us not deny earnestness and sincerity to thousands of these defenders of the moribund creeds. But we

must also recognise that there is a sincerity in devotion to the false, and an earnestness in the conviction of error.

The Old Morality, as inculcated by the theologians, teaches that God created man and woman, placed them in a delightful garden, and bade them eat of all fruits save that of the Tree of Knowledge. At the prompting of an evil spirit at war with God, the woman ate of the forbidden fruit, and induced the man also to disobey. For this offence the man and woman were expelled from Eden, and sin and sorrow became the heritage of their posterity. Thus Man fell and incurred God's anger. But after the lapse of ages the Almighty devised a scheme whereby His wrath should be appeased, and He sent His only Son into the world to suffer as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Belief in the Atonement of Jesus Christ therefore ensures salvation for sinners, while repudiation of the sacrifice merits the torments of Hell hereafter. Such is the central doctrine of the true Protestant faith in its pristine form, according to evangelical interpretation; such is the belief that has swayed the hearts of millions of fervent Christians.

Let us trace in these pages the effect that belief in the dogma of the Fall and the Atonement has had upon the conduct of life. We will not here even briefly review the mass of evidence adduced by truth-loving and earnest minds to prove that the Bible, the sole authority for this teaching, was the product of the human brain in the ages of credulity and superstition. We will instead judge the teaching by its fruits in the Old Morality.

Thomas Paine, a devout Theist, began as a child to question the morality of a religion based upon the

plan of vicarious sacrifice. A creed that shocks the heart of an innocent child seemed essentially false to Paine. And since his day a host of witnesses have arisen to testify against the theory of redemption, on the plea that a good and just God would be incapable of shaping a plan of forgiveness which outrages an unperturbed sense of equity. In this country Thomas Hobbes—who won the respect of the Puritan Cromwell—Hume, Shelley, J. S. Mill, Matthew Arnold, and George Eliot, among many other noble and learned men and women of wide esteem, have, by their earnestness, logic, and eloquence, protested against the system of ethics founded upon literal belief in the theory of salvation by the shedding of blood. Yet the moral sanctions to which this doctrine gave rise still survive, and influence the race, the State, the institutions of learning, and the individual.

It will be said that the Old Morality, the morality of the theologians, could not have been compact of evil; on the contrary, that thousands of moral men and women lived, and still live, in accordance with its canons. Undoubtedly this is true. In every faith there is a germ of truth; in every primitive religion there is an incentive to right living. This is true in regard to faiths long dead and to those that exist. Mithraism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity afford instances of high moral character. But let it be always understood that no man who zealously and consistently follows the teaching of ancient error, injustice, and wrong-doing, embodied amidst the true and the moral in every religion, lives the worthiest life.

Is it not manifest that the finest types of the

religions of all ages, and in every clime, are those who have endeavoured to reform the creed in which they were reared? Is this not true of Wiclif, St. Francis, Whitefield, and George Fox, to mention but a few illustrious names? And amid the multitude of humbler adherents to the faith of Christianity, who have done noble deeds in domestic privacy and in obscurity, shall we not find that these were better than the beliefs which they professed to hold? We are all of us acquainted with persons of the liveliest faith in terrible dogmas, whose conduct happily derives very little stimulus from their belief, whose moral actions are the outcome of a good nature and of reason, though they often conflict with the harsh teaching of their religion. Even the evangelical Christian of the extreme order, who avows a love for a God who will consign a brother to the endless torture of hell-fire, is so infinitely greater in mercy than his Deity that he shrinks from whipping his disobedient child, or from speaking angrily to a friend. How merciful is the fortune that makes men better than creeds!

In their apologies for supernatural beliefs, pious advocates ask us whether the lives of devoted saints, the mortifications, and the willingness to face cruel death at the hands of persecutors are not sufficient testimony to the truth of the Christian faith. No; such testimony cannot be admitted. In all ages men have suffered every conceivable form of torture to please their deities. The truth of the Dervish faith is not attested by the fact that these brave fanatics rush up to the very muzzles of rifles, in a state of religious ecstasy. The worth of a creed is not proved by the heroism of its martyrs, for thousands have

perished at the stake and by the sword to the glory of false and harmful beliefs. A Roman Catholic will not accept the verity of Protestant doctrine on the ground that the teaching for which men will yield their lives must be the true religion, nor will a Protestant give credence to the claims of Romanism because of the example of Roman Catholic martyrs.

Those who have sought to foster a higher morality have recognised that without doubt there can be no inquiry, and without inquiry there can be no knowledge. Unbelief is essential to the evolution of moral ideas; it lies at the very root of all fine conduct. No one will deny that religions and moral systems progress and develop through cumulative knowledge. How, then, do they develop except by a continual process of doubt, inquiry, unbelief, and the substitution of new beliefs? It is said that one should not shake belief, nor attempt to destroy simple faith. Why, then, do Christians expend great sums in constant endeavour to subvert the belief of Jews, Hindus, and Chinese? They will answer that they are justified in attempting to destroy alien faiths because they have something higher and more moral to offer in their place. And this is precisely the attitude of the Rationalist who criticises Christianity. He is convinced through reflection, study, and experience that he has a higher and more moral code of living to offer instead of the beliefs which reason and conscience repudiate. He is not pledged solely to destruction; he has a definite scheme of construction. Rationalism is not utterly at variance with the reforming methods of the faithful. It works upon lines of progress, assails evils and errors, retains all that is vital and precious in the old, and sets forth the

excellence of the new. Pure Rationalism, or the New Morality, is but the manifestation of the eternal spirit of ethical progress, working gradually towards nobler ideals of life through knowledge and experience.

Let us cease to use the words "unbeliever" and "doubter" as denunciatory epithets. The noblest minds in the world's history have doubted and disbelieved; the sincerest intellects of our day are compelled to exercise scepticism, and to avow unbelief in many of the popular doctrines. Surely, if it was right for Luther to doubt and disavow the dogmas of Rome, and for Wesley to doubt and relinquish certain tenets of the established religion in England, it was right for Mill, Dr. Martineau, and Professor Huxley to heed their reason and obey their consciences to the end of disproving the false and the injurious?

My aim in the following chapters is to show that man's hope is in reasoned morality, in knowledge which springs from doubt and inquiry, in enthusiasm for humanity, and in reverence for the good in whatever guise it may come. I shall attempt to prove that whatsoever is of good report is due to our respect for Truth first and last. And without denying that the stimulus of the old faith was sometimes for good, I hope to show that the New Morality affords an incomparably greater incentive to all humane, just, benevolent, and enlightened conduct. Only by reviewing the past can we judge of the influences at work in the present, and hope to rectify the errors still making for evil in the life of the nation and the individual.

CHAPTER II.

THE REIGN OF IGNORANCE AND CRUELTY

LACTANTIUS, a Christian teacher of the fourth century, declared that it mattered nothing whether the earth was globular or flat, and that all knowledge of a secular character was folly. St. Augustine was of the same opinion. Centuries later it was the general belief that our earth was the centre of the universe, and that all things in creation were made for man's service. In the long age of unquestioning piety, credulity produced a complete indifference to truth, a fanatical dread of inquiry, and a contempt for all learning but that of the theologians. The Old Morality flourished upon ignorance, and we have only to turn to Lecky's *History of European Morals* for evidence of the evil and suffering born of a piety divorced from reason.

Throughout the Dark Ages of uncritical belief the Church ruled its followers with an iron despotism. Whenever moral precepts stood in the way of ecclesiastical supremacy they were disregarded and set at naught. All who served the Church were considered virtuous, even if they led lives of monstrous iniquity; all who doubted the claims of ecclesiasticism were exposed to savage tortures and to death. Men who were so far evolved in their moral nature as to recognise and practise the virtue of charity towards the poor could turn the rack upon the limbs of

heretics. Intolerance assumed its most rampant and cruel forms. One shudders as one reads the records of the pitiless cruelty that accompanied the fervent belief of this black and appalling stage in the evolution of the Church. Even for reading the Bible, the sole authority of "revealed religion," men were burned, and a suspected thought of a heretical nature was a plea for the infliction of savage torments. In eighteen years the zealous Torquemada is said to have sent 10,220 heretics to the stake, and confined and tortured 97,321 men and women.

Were these atrocities the outcome of the inherent savagery of mankind? In a degree they were so; but we must not forget, as I have pointed out, that the hearts which could steel themselves to the perpetration of such horrors could also, in many instances, soften at a tale of suffering or want recited by one of the faithful. This fierce bigotry was not incompatible with the possession of humane sentiments; but sympathy was never extended towards those who conscientiously differed from the belief of the bigot. The persecutor is not necessarily a depraved and utterly callous being. In his blind zeal he imagines that his acts serve the Deity whom he reveres.

I dwell for a space upon this phenomenon of pietistic fervour because I hope to show how powerful is the influence for evil-doing upon minds darkened by the errors of immoral creeds. We should all know that even to this day religious intolerance of heterodox opinion leads sometimes to acts of violence in our own country, and that in this survival of persecution we trace the effect of a lingering belief that the ill-treatment of sincere unbelievers is justifiable, and even meritorious.

Is it untrue that the Old Morality which sanctioned the cruel punishment of heresy found no precedent for its sanction in the examples of violence recorded in the Bible? To the mind of a dispassionate inquirer it is clear that the worshippers of a God of vengeance and fury will not always act with justice and clemency in their conduct towards the rejectors of their theology. Divine command to slay the heathen to the extermination of whole tribes is not unnaturally claimed by zealots as authority for war upon heretics. A Church Militant, by its very title, is pledged to defend the faith from attack, and when Churchmen are exceedingly fervent, and at the same time tainted with ferocity, they will not hesitate to emulate the numerous examples of violence set forth in the inspired writings upon which their moral codes are framed.

Tolerance is one of the cardinal tenets of the New Morality. Under the old order it was not even a minor rule of conduct. "Tolerance in religion, it is well known," writes Hallam, "so unanimously admitted (at least verbally) even by theologians in the present century, was seldom considered as practicable, much less as a matter of right, during the period of the Reformation." Bishop Warburton, a Protestant ecclesiastic, stated "the exacting conformity of the ministry by the governors of the Church is no persecution." It is sometimes asserted, though in the face of ample contrary evidence, that persecution practically ceased with the Reformation. Unfortunately, Protestants found the same authority for the punishment of heretics as the Catholics had found during their supremacy. Lutherans avowed that, if it was right to visit correction upon criminal offenders, it

was also right to punish the teachers of heresies. To this end Luther bitterly persecuted the Jews, destroying their synagogues, schools, and homes, and confiscating their sacred books.

The lengths of vindictive oppression to which Luther was led by a perfervid faith in supernatural morality afford a most instructive example of the danger of basing conduct upon theological belief. We need not be surprised that Luther condemned reason as the "arch-enemy of faith" and "the most dangerous thing." It was just in this hatred of the calm method of reason that his weakness lay. His mind was saturated with superstitions quite as gross as those which he assailed in the Popish creed. Not content with the Devil as an explanation for the sin in men's hearts, Luther invented a host of auxiliary demons, who perpetually tempt mankind. This forceful man did nothing for reason, nothing for toleration. He had no need for either agent of reform, though he took upon himself the labour of a mighty reformation. Toleration comes through a cultured reasoned morality. Luther's morality was founded in an implicit faith, a belief in rewards and punishments, in miraculous revelations, in a theory of vicarious sacrifices—all things apart from that "sweet reasonableness" that tends to the toleration for honest doubt and earnest inquiry.

When Protestantism triumphed over Romanism, and the monasteries of England were suppressed, the Old Morality underwent no vast change. The new faith worked no miracles of progress. We read that the population was continually thinned by plague and poverty, that the clergy and nobles led riotous lives, that many of the peers were unable to read or write,

and that the labouring classes were in a condition of frightful ignorance. Even at the beginning of the eighteenth century there were thirty-four counties without a printer. The view that knowledge was of trifling importance, the ancient hostility to reason handed down by pious tradition, still prevailed. There was no conception of culture in its widest sense, as "preparation for complete living." The Old Morality fought science as it had fought Popery, "the Devil's counterfeit of religion."

In the treatment of offenders and vagabonds, the retributive spirit, which led men to persecute, induced the framing of barbarous and wholly ineffectual laws. The punishment of death was imposed for the most trivial offences, and the penal system rivalled in harshness the code of the Jews under Moses. Beggars were whipped and branded, and condemned to death upon a second charge of soliciting alms. Ferocity characterised all forms of punishment; the spirit of revenge in the Hebrew Scriptures gave countenance and precedent for the infliction of reprisals and cruelties, and belief in a vengeful God, who had prepared a pit of fire for the torture of unsaved sinners and unconverted heretics, inspired law-makers and judges with insensate vindictiveness. We often hear of the cruelty of barbaric people; but the cruelty of the civilised States in Christendom has rivalled the worst atrocities of primitive men. "Europeans, loudly professing a religion of love, have far exceeded them [savages] in the ingenuity of their multitudinous appliances for the infliction of prolonged agonies on heretics, on witches, and on political offenders," writes Herbert Spencer.

It is not uncommon in our own day to hear persons,

who have failed to profit by the experience of the past, loudly demand the lynching and the torture of criminal offenders. In America, under the reign of the Old Morality, horrible torments are frequently inflicted upon negro culprits by citizens who profess to respect the principle that laws for the protection of society should not be based upon a spirit of vengeance, and carried out in a gratification of the mob-instinct of cruelty. And in England this lust for revenge is often manifested in the popular indignation against a brutal murderer, who, in the language of the street, "deserves something far worse than hanging." Such acts and sentiments are the heritage of the old order, the lingering survival of those days when a boy was flogged once a fortnight for seven years, and the crowd clamoured if the lash failed to draw tortured screams from the evil-doer. "The quality of mercy" in the administration of justice was negated in England during the Middle Ages, and for long after. Gaols were noisome dens, forcing-houses of bodily and mental disease, the sources of plagues and gaol-fevers. As late as 1729 the Fleet and Marshalsea Prisons were so terribly overcrowded that prisoners slept three in one bed, and forty occupied one room.

Yet all the drastic and barbarous punishments of this period failed of their purpose. The country was infested with robbers and vagabonds, when robbery and begging were capital offences, and the severest sentences proved no deterrent to lawless acts. Pious lawmakers justified the cruelest penalties, and sought to stamp out evil-doing by measures of increasing severity. Seneca, Plato, and Aristotle had taught that the purpose of punishment should be reformative and remedial, and not simply retributive. But the

Christian rulers and jurists of this dark age had no conception of the scientific methods of preventing and curing crime. When Beccaria published his famous treatise upon crime and punishment, in 1764, he was described by the religionists as "a madman," a "stupid impostor," and the author of a work "sprung from the deepest abyss of darkness, horrible, monstrous, full of poison." Later, Lord Kames, a Rationalist, wrote an account of the development of our punitive system from the revengeful modes of savagery. But, from 1752 to 1882, the House of Lords stubbornly resisted every measure of criminal law reform. Paley, in his *Moral and Political Philosophy*, warmly defended the existing harsh criminal laws. Even the generous Fielding was so tainted with the inhumanity of his time that he could defend the pillory and the cutting off of a man's ears as "an extremely mild" punishment for libel. It is to the credit of Fielding, however, that he disapproved of the penalty of hanging for trivial offences.

Until 1882 it was a capital crime in England to steel a horse or a sheep. And yet under the rule of Sabaco, in ancient Egypt, the punishment of death for any crime was abolished, while in Pagan Rome the death penalty was expunged from the code for twenty-five years. Rome, in the pre-Christian era, was moving on the line of progress and wisdom in the matter of penal reform. How far have we advanced in England when we find a great journal such as the *Times* expressing the ignorant view that the scientific reformers of the criminal system are of that portion of the British public "steeped in a sloppy and slushy sentimentalism," and that for certain flagrant offenders "hanging is a great deal too good"? The

Old Morality was not concerned with the causes of crimes and reformatory methods. It punished ruthlessly, and, as Lord Kames contended, its penalties were a relic of savagery and ignorance. Penology had made no advance from the Mosaic Code, and in the sixteenth century the word "justice" was not in the English vocabulary. "A man pressed to death for refusing to plead, a woman burned for coining," states Macaulay, "excited less sympathy than is now felt for a galled horse or an over-driven ox." In the age that produced Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, and Locke, the mass of the people were incredibly brutal, and callous to suffering. The upper classes were intemperate, clownish, and grossly intolerant of religious dissent. They spent their time in field sports and drinking, while one in four of the whole population was the proportion of pauperism. Gentlemen and ladies of high birth went in parties to the filthy prisons to witness the flogging of offenders, male and female. Any cruel spectacle attracted an eager crowd. Criminals in the pillory were pelted with stones and garbage, and executions were made the occasion of festivity.

The same inhumanity prevailed in the treatment of pupils and domestic servants. Headmasters of colleges used the birch freely; masters beat their servants and apprentices for the slightest misdemeanour, and animals were everywhere ill-used. "Man's inhumanity to man" characterised the period. These vices cannot be ascribed to irreligion and impiety, for the people were devout believers, and there was no "freethought movement," except amongst a very small section of the cultured. We often hear of the "peril of substituting reason for faith." Reason was

not the cause of these barbarous conditions; there was very little reason abroad. Faith was fervent; the Church was loyally supported by the Tory gentry, and the people were unquestioning believers in the national religion. To what extent was the community influenced for righteousness, justice, and benevolence, by its pious zeal? The answer is to be found in the history of the social life of the country.

The Old Morality was so conspicuous for its cruelty and religious zeal that we are led to inquire whether there is a relation between piety and ferocity. In the most "religious" countries at the present day, such as Spain and Italy, there is no regard for the worst sufferings of the animals in the service of man. People enslaved by the teaching of theologians are rarely kind to brutes. Humane treatment of animals marks a high stage in the moral development of societies, and this stage is only reached by the widespread sense of sympathy which is born of knowledge. The men and women who took part in the brutal baitings of bulls and badgers of the olden time were not of the low rabble only, but of all classes. To deny entirely that they were incapable of compassion for the weak and the suffering would be unjust. They were not fiends, but just average men and women with the average amount of understanding. Their moral sentiment was not violated by gloating upon the torture of culprits and the worrying of bulls, and they found nothing in their religion to condemn these barbarities. The gallows, the pillory, the whipping-post, the ducking-stool, the bull-ring, and the cockpit were reputable institutions of the age, patronised by the nobility, gentry, and clergy. Here and there, in the cruelest days, isolated humane men shrank

from these savage spectacles; now and then a tear fell when a wrinkled grandmother was burned as a witch. But these sympathetic persons were in advance of their time, and their protests were received with anger or derision. Anyone who advocated kindness and mercy ran the risk of incurring the cruelty of his neighbours. History drearily repeats itself. To-day the apostles of international peace frequently encounter the spirit of the Old Morality when they attempt to plead their cause in public; to-day the friends of animals are described by coarse-minded persons as "sickly sentimentalists." It is not long since our bishops vigorously opposed the abolition of hanging for petty offences.

From what source springs the modern manifestation of humanitarianism? It is certainly not due to theological influence, for that influence is waning rapidly. The progress in refinement of sympathy has been hand-in-hand with the spread of reason. The dawn of the era of the New Morality was the rising of the sun of science after the long gloomy night of theology and metaphysical sophistry. Ages had been wasted in the fruitless speculations of the cloister. The moral philosophy of the schools was a compound of casuistry and asceticism, and the course of education was restricted to the narrowest ecclesiastical teaching. Universities are not free even in our day from the charge of Adam Smith, that they were "the sanctuaries in which exploded systems and obsolete prejudices found shelter and protection, after they had been hunted out of every corner of the world." The knowledge essential to the making of complete human beings—truth-seeking, observation of the phenomena of nature, exactness of statement, care for the body as

well as for the soul, and the cultivation of the reasoning faculty — was despised, neglected, and deemed profitless. Any expression of opinion which seemed at variance with the superstitious creeds of the time brought its inevitable indictment for heresy. St. Augustine and the Fathers had declared ignorance to be the proper condition for piety, and the stake and the rack had impressed this doctrine upon the mind of the people. Luther had scoffed at science, and Calvin had denounced it; the Protestant clergy and the teachers in the colleges would have none of it if a single proposition appeared to cast discredit upon the dogmas of religion.

The crusade against knowledge was conducted with the utmost zeal in England under the Old Morality. Clericalism fought secular education for centuries, and the poor grovelled in the grossest ignorance. Men's hearts were not hopelessly corrupt, the moral instinct was not dead; but the evil that springs from want of thought was everywhere rampant. We trace it in the persecuting tendency, the harsh measures to suppress beggary, the futile and brutal treatment of malefactors, the punishment of alleged witches, the neglect of the diseased, the selfishness of the wealthy, the coarseness of the populace, and the cruelty to animals. Scientific knowledge was the equipment necessary for a campaign against the poverty, crime, and disease that piety could not mitigate. But in the seventeenth century the rich man's library was composed of a Bible and a few devotional books, while his wife was often unable to write correctly, and the working class could not read.

Thomas Hobbes, in his *Leviathan*, made a strong plea for Rationalism and the abandonment of the

empty philosophy of the clergy. He arose in an age of unreason, to proclaim the right of reason, and to announce that it is fatal to permit the intellect to wander beyond "the data of experience." This wonderful thinker, who was generations in advance of his time, naturally excited the odium of clericalism. His writings cannot have been widely read, for few persons were able to read; but *Leviathan* made a stir, and his opponents succeeded in legal suppression of the work. It is probable that the replies of his orthodox critics were more familiar to the mass than the great book; but *Leviathan* marks an epoch in English thought. I mention Hobbes because he stands out in the history of Rationalism at a time when the country was steeped in credulity. He is a noble figure in the long line of thinkers who have redeemed England from the tyranny of superstition, and built up the New Morality out of reason.

Very few men indeed were ready to listen to Thomas Hobbes. John Bunyan, Richard Baxter, and Jeremy Taylor found more favour from the spirit of the age, and as Christian moralists they served a certain purpose, while they enriched the literature of England. But towards an amelioration of the evils of their day they could accomplish very little. They were pledged to faith and opposed to reason; they were not of the school of Hobbes and John Locke, nor were they as broad-minded as Milton. The devout of that age regarded this world as a thorny road to heaven; they were mostly apathetic to every concern save the supreme necessity of convincing sinners of the wrath to come, the existence of a terrible hell, and the need for salvation through the acceptance of the doctrine of atonement. They armed themselves against doubts

as assaults of a personal devil, and they had no respect for those who dared to question the fallibility of their doctrines. Existence upon this globe was but a preparation for the higher life to come; they were pilgrims having no part with the vain knowledge, the vanities, and the pomps of the world. We find their descendants to-day in the strict evangelical sects. Viscountess Powerscourt, who wrote "The bustle of life should be no more to us than the buzzing of flies round a corpse," is a typical example of the fervid pietist who believes that all mundane affairs are things apart from worthy Christian living.

Literally and universally obeyed, this other-worldliness would lead to the ruin of nations. The teaching of Clifford, "Let us take hands and help one another," seems to many of us a nobler morality than this shirking of our responsibility as members of society. To regard the activities of human life as the mere "buzzing of flies round a corpse" is anti-social and unhealthy. The doctrine of the speedy end of the world is a counsel of inaction, resulting in the paralysis of the moral nature and intellectual power. If it can be proved that man is immortal, the teaching is none the less harmful, for men are naturally dependent upon one another during their sojourn in a world of which we have exact knowledge through cumulative experience, and it behoves each one to act his part in the commonwealth. The misguided saints and ascetics who killed the joy of life, despised knowledge, and wasted their minds and bodies in the penances and mortifications of the cloister and the cell, were the morbid product of 'an age of ignorance, cruelty, and injustice. "A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac," says Mr. Lecky, "without know-

ledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghostly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero, and the lives of Socrates and Cato."

St. Paul had taught the Corinthians that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." Now, a literal acceptance of this dictum is plainly fraught with peril, and there is no doubt that it was part of the fundamental teaching of the Church of Rome, and that it was afterwards taught by Protestant divines. This assumption of God's displeasure with all knowledge save that of a sacred character led to the darkness which spread over Europe during the centuries from Constantine to Luther, and it is still responsible for the stagnation of thought and the prostitution of reason in theologically-led societies. The withholding of instruction has always served the interest of ecclesiasticism. "Ignorance is the mother of devotion." To ignorance is also due the chief part of the evils of communities. But this fact was not realised by clergymen, who deliberately taught the advantages of ignorance and fostered every form of credulity. Religion became a soporific that soothed the masses and hindered the spread of that discontent which is the prelude to the removal of inequalities and injustices. The position of the Church of to-day is summed up in the words of Ruskin: "Our national religion is the performance of Church ceremonies and the preaching of soporific truths (or untruths) to keep the mob quietly at work while we amuse ourselves."

Dr. Hugh Blair, the eminent Scottish preacher, who

was born in 1718, was an educated and, in some respects, liberal-minded man. His sermons were eloquent, and he possessed considerable literary taste and ability. Yet Blair pronounced against the foolishness of worldly wisdom, and maintained that the evangelical faith was the sole basis of ethics. "Our only security against innumerable crimes," preached Dr. Blair, "to which the restraints of human life cannot reach, is the dread of an invisible avenger, and of those future punishments which He hath prepared for the guilty. Remove this dread from the minds of men, and you strengthen the hands of the wicked and endanger the safety of human society." The theory that the dread of "an invisible avenger" is the only safeguard for morality is entirely fallacious. Thousands abstain from evil-doing without any thought or conception of superhuman disapprobation; thousands practise active virtues without any hope of reward here or hereafter. The fear of "an invisible avenger" has rarely deterred the lawless from committing crimes; the dread of detection by the custodians of the law has had a far stronger influence.

The supposed punishments of a vengeful Deity may deter savages from infringing certain rules of the tribe, and the hope of reward from the gods may act as an incentive to the observance of a code amongst barbarous people. But, as men advance in intelligence and become capable of inquiry, supernatural beings are more remote, less real and near, and therefore less terrifying. Do we find that a waning belief in hell-fire has strengthened the hands of the wicked and imperilled the safety of the community? Are the criminal classes of our times more vicious and dangerous than they were two hundred years ago?

Is there a general decay of the moral sense? Improved conditions and a growth of humanitarian feeling give a negative answer to these questions. We are more just, more humane, more alive to the necessity for an observance of the civic virtues than our ancestors, and the change has been brought about by the beneficent increase of knowledge. The science of physiology has taught us to care for life; logic and moral philosophy have instructed us in the principles of justice, and general culture has tended to refine the people. Those who deplore the rationalisation of creeds must deplore the spread of the higher morality, for it is obvious that rational inquiry and criticism have developed a finer sense of right conduct. Those who protest that men will only love rectitude when there is promise of a future reward for well-doing, and shun evil when there is the threat of everlasting punishment for sin, should take a wide view of human history before they attempt to establish their theory as proven truth.

When Descartes resolved to study nature and man to the end that he might live rightly, was he inspired by the hope of reward in another world? Were Hume and Gibbon moral because they feared future penalties? Was it in anticipation of reward that Thomas Paine championed the rights of men and risked his life in the service of humanity? When Walt Whitman spent himself in nursing the wounded during the American war, was he actuated by expectation of divine recompense? When Theodore Parker and Ernestine Rose faced hostile mobs to advocate the freeing of negro slaves, was it from a desire for future bliss? No, in these aspirations and actions there was simply the impulsion of powerful moral ideas. Call

this incentive to good conduct a religion if you choose, but do not confuse it with the faith that teaches a fall of man and an atonement, and a creed that proclaims a morality founded upon the dread of punishments and the hope of rewards.

We reap as we sow. Theologians sowed superstition, false morality, and pseudo-philosophy, and they reaped in stultified reason, wasted human power, harshness, inhumanity towards opponents, a disregard for truth, and a neglect of social duties. Shall we continue to sow with the same seed, or shall we cast the seed of knowledge, and reap the harvest of a richer growth? "We are far from the noon of man; there is time for the race to grow." Will our growth in the future be in reason and righteousness? Let us sift the grain from the chaff of the Old Morality.

It is sometimes charged against ethical reformers that they are apt to evince intolerance towards the professors of the old beliefs and moral codes. Condemnation of creeds, opposition to opinion, only become intolerant when methods of force are employed. Discussion is the method of suasion through an appeal to the reason and conscience, and that is the only method that the principle of the New Morality permits. Rationalists may plead fervently, and, at times, with undue vehemence of phrase and expression; but the advocates of free thought and free speech in religious matters can never become parties to the persecuting spirit that seeks to close men's mouths, to deprive religionists of the right to believe and to worship according to their tenets, and to inflict penalties and pains upon those who hold the most irrational opinions. "Only where reason rules does universal love rule," truly says Feuerbach;

“reason is itself nothing else than universal love. It was faith, not love, not reason, that invented Hell.” It is not possible for Rationalism to follow the precedent of that intolerance which marks the progress of religious faith. Such a course would entirely negate the basic principle of reason. The intolerance that leads to persecution is the grossest manifestation of unreason, the utter stultification of the love that grows from reasonableness of judgment.

Criticism is not intolerance. Champions of the ancient order exhibit a want of thought and a lack of fairness when they assume that any critical examination of their beliefs, or any disparagement of the practices resulting from such beliefs, is proof of an intolerant attitude towards believers. Intolerance only begins when there are deliberate falsification of facts, the malignant misrepresentation of hostile view, the slander of opponents, and resort to persecution by the strong arm of the Church, the law, and the gaoler. Intolerance in speech may lead to acts of persecution, but forcible denunciation of creeds is sometimes a proof of the sincerity of the denunciator. And orthodox Christians, who are prone to raise the protest of intolerance against Latitudinarians and Rationalists who assail their dogmas, should at least remember that the history of orthodoxy is a history of organised and persistent persecution, and that Christendom cannot in a few generations purge itself of the virus of intolerance which has permeated the whole organism. Reason has assailed faith, often vigorously, sometimes harshly; but reason has never employed the aid of civil power to crush beliefs with the sword, the faggot, and the rack. Reason will never impose social disabilities upon even the most

dangerous of its foes, for reason relies solely upon the method of conviction through pacific suasion. "It is not conceivable," writes John M. Robertson, in *A Short History of Christianity*, "that the gradual dissolution of supernaturalist notions will ever of itself work such evil as is told of in the story of the military evangel of Christianity in the Dark Ages, the Crusades, the Albigensian massacres, the conquests of Mexico and Peru, the Anabaptist movement at the outset of the Reformation, or the massacre of St. Bartholomew, to say nothing of the death-roll of the Inquisition and the mania against witchcraft."

Knowledge and experience teach that in the long run persecution fails of its object. The insensate propaganda of persecution that devastated Europe from the time of Constantine until the Renaissance wrought nothing save the ultimate triumph of the heresies that it strove to kill. Since the establishment of Protestantism in England, the dissenting sects have grown and spread their schisms far and wide, despite the strenuous intolerance of Church and State and the imposition of unjust legal restrictions. Fanaticism is the worst enemy of moral advancement. The New Morality will have none of it. We are learning slowly that the creed which can only be made to flourish through a process of harsh usage, the repression of inquiry and criticism, and the punishment of unbelief, is radically unsound and doomed to extinction at the end of an ephemeral existence. The specious show of the general adherence to a religious faith founded upon supernaturalisms, surmises, and counterfeit morality, and enforced by astute and powerful hierarchies, allied with despotic governments, may deceive the inexperienced and unreflective

promulgators, but it cannot deceive the cautious, experienced, and reflective student of human history.

In the hour of its decadence the more thoughtful of the apologists for the Old Morality are learning that reason, which has never persecuted, has steadily and quietly gained ground inch by inch from the beginning of religious strifes. Descartes, Bruno, Spinoza, Hobbes, Lord Shaftesbury, Hume, Feuerbach, Strauss, Renan, Mill, and Darwin, each in their day won the support of the finest intellects and the most earnestly moral men of their countries. All along the line fanatical piety has sought to trample upon truth, to suppress and annihilate the spirit of inquiry, and to preserve dogma at any cost. This tyranny has only succeeded in retarding the spread of culture and the higher ethical ideas, while the very despotism of its methods has in the long run caused revolt within the Church, and impelled the best minds to an exercise of reason.

In our own time the laborious and earnest investigations of Charles Darwin have led the educated orthodox to re-examine the "evidences" upon which religious faith is based. Many of these alleged evidences are found to be wholly untenable; the very foundation of beliefs that swayed myriads of minds for centuries sink and collapse when tested by the proven testimony of biological research. Honest clergymen, such as Kingsley, find the new trend of scientific opinion "most curious," and they are bound to reckon with it in relation to the creeds that they have vowed to defend. Kingsley speaks of the evolutionary doctrine as conquering everywhere, "by the sheer force of truth." Two hundred years ago a canon of the Church who dared to suggest that

"special creation" was possibly the conjectural explanation of the origin of species, framed by untutored minds, would have forfeited his stipend, and earned the anathema of all believers. Nowadays this "sheer force of truth" is penetrating the intellect of every civilised nation, and the resistance offered to it is so feeble that it counts for little.

The old faith and the morality born of it are at their last stand. They have been tested by time; they have been long upon trial, and the world is outgrowing them. It is no exaggeration that they are rapidly giving place to the new. We who have closely observed the signs and tendencies of the past twenty-five years can already note a marked progression. Tolerance is widening, cruel and immoral beliefs are perishing, conduct is regarded as of more vital importance than faith, civism is becoming a more general virtue, commercial rapacity is reprobated, crime is studied as a social disease, and scientific means are employed in its remedy; the position of woman in the home and the State is being raised from the ignominy heaped upon the sex through the teaching of the Old Morality, and wherever we turn reform is working through the abandonment of supposed supernatural commands, and the substitution of the finer culture that is the only true "preparation for complete living."

CHAPTER III.

THE FAILURE OF THE OLD MORALITY

MANY of the more liberal-minded Churchmen and Nonconformists, while they regret the sceptical attitude towards Christianity, are yet able to appraise the honesty of those who repudiate their cardinal tenets. They will even venture to defend the doubter, though they may counsel him to avoid all reading, reflection, and controversy that may confirm him in unbelief. Thus far have they learned the lesson of tolerance; to this length have they profited by the leaven of the New Morality. But when the inquirer arrives at a definite conclusion regarding the supernatural authority for moral action, and avows unbelief in the creeds of the Church, his orthodox friends maintain with fervour that he has no right to induce other persons to exercise scepticism. "Unless you can give the people something better than their beliefs," they say, "you are acting wantonly and cruelly in attacking religious dogmas."

Does it not strike the liberal-minded apologist for the old beliefs that doubt and inquiry are not specific manifestations of levity or perversity, but, on the contrary, that they prove moral and intellectual seriousness, and a desire to know rightly, to the end of living uprightly? Everyone doubts something; everyone disbelieves in certain accredited notions. The Christian flatly denies the faith of the Buddhist,

and doubts the evidences of any other religion save his own. He even prides himself upon his sceptical rejection of the so-called proofs of other faiths. And while he denounces the "aggressiveness" of those who question his own beliefs, he is often ultra-aggressive in his criticism of other religions. He deems it no sin, but a merit, to shake the faith of a Jew or a Hindu; yet, if a Rationalist endeavours to convince him that the Bible is no more infallible than the Vedas or the Koran, he protests loudly, and condemns the "aggressive and intolerant attitude of scepticism."

Rationalism claims that it has "something better" than the faiths born of unreason. It is prepared to prove this claim by a review of the past and present state of society in Christendom. The decline of superstitious belief is due to the spirit of Rationalism; the accompanying heightening of moral thought and action is indubitably attributable to the influence of rational ethics. The facts which are set down in this short book are not borrowed entirely from the writings of heterodox historians; indeed, the greater part of them are to be found in orthodox accounts of the rise and progress of the Christian religion. To destroy from a mere zest for destruction is not the aim of Rationalism; but the ground must be cleared, the encumbrances must be removed, before we can rebuild upon a more lasting foundation. The task of pulling down an imposing and time-honoured edifice is not always congenial. It may be decayed and dangerous; yet the pile stands for vast human energy, and it is still revered by worshippers. Alas! that the energy has been misspent, that the devotees should continue to prop up a tottering structure. We can but essay to teach them that it is time to build again a fairer,

stronger edifice, with those materials and implements that new thought and fresh energy have discovered. We can but assure them that no sound stone amongst the mass of rubble will be discarded in the labour of reconstruction.

Let us return now to the evidences of the failure of the Old Morality in the past and the present. I have stated that the universal existence of the persecuting passion is in itself a direct impeachment of the morality founded upon faith in superhuman sanctions. A belief which can only be enforced by war, torture, and penances is not a moral belief. Such belief can never be the basis of a stable system of morality, because it outrages the cardinal principle of moral conduct at the outset. Intolerance is utterly incompatible with morality. Unfortunately, this fact was ignored by the complainants against Catholic Christianity, just as the Christians of the days of Constantine had ignored it in relation to Pagan creeds. The leaders of Protestantism pursued the old course of coercion in respect of Romanists, and followed the evil tradition of the Romish hierarchy in the suppression of scientific thought and Biblical criticism. The tyranny of the Papacy was abated, but the despotism of "revealed" religion remained. Freedom of thought was made a criminal offence. It was praiseworthy to doubt and disbelieve the teaching of Catholicism, but it was iniquitous to doubt and discredit the "evidences" of the Protestant belief in an inspired and infallible Bible.

The divisions among the Protestant sects in the sixteenth century were a repetition of the variation during the early ages of the Christian faith. Intolerance was the characteristic of every sect, and of

each split from the sects. Lutherans and Calvinists quarrelled incessantly, and the thirteen groups of Anabaptists were at variance one with the other. Melancthon expressed joy at his death and release from a world "filled with the monstrous hatreds of theologians." In 1553 Calvin burned Servetus for Unitarian heresy, and from that time onwards Deists and dissenters from the doctrine of the Trinity were systematically harassed and persecuted throughout Europe. We read that in 1611 Bartholomew Leggatt, of Essex, a man "well versed in the Scriptures and of irreproachable conversation," was burned to death at Smithfield, before an immense mob of spectators, for denying the divinity of Christ and a plurality of persons in the Godhead. Protestantism was employing all the old cruel methods of Roman Catholicism; there was no advance in toleration, no manifest development of reason and forbearance. Honesty of thought and courage in expressing conviction were not respected. Leggatt was offered pardon if he would recant his heresies at the stake. He refused, and the fire was kindled. At the same date, one Edward Whiteman, of Lichfield, was condemned to be burnt on a charge of sixteen heresies.

The state of England after the Reformation illustrates the complete failure of irrational pietism in ameliorating social evils, and in elevating the standard of morals. As a civilising influence, the new Christianity was manifestly inadequate. The rebellion against papal power did not free men's minds from the ignorance of superstition. Uncompromising faith was still exacted, and the right of the individual in following his private judgments was denied. Any confession of dissent from the dogmas of authority

brought its penalty of brutal punishment. Fanaticism still flourished; reason still remained almost impotent to stem the tide of arrogant and gross ignorance.

In the matter of preventing disease and caring for the sick, the Old Morality, with its prescription of faith and prayer, and its hostility to science, was responsible for terrible plagues, epidemics, and a multitude of preventible ailments. In 1131 the Synod of Rheims forbade the clergy to study law or medicine. Such prohibitions were common. Autopsies were forbidden by reason of the theory of physical resurrection after burial. Medicines were vetoed, and miraculous healing by the touch of relics was inculcated by the Church. Millions of sufferers perished for lack of medical knowledge and through utter neglect of sanitation. Uncleanliness of the body was esteemed as a virtue, and Lecky tells us that "the saints who were most admired had become one hideous mass of clotted filth." Cardinals of the Church were infested with vermin. Godliness was taught everywhere as the prime merit, but cleanliness was held of little account in the conduct of life. The contempt for the body, taught by Catholic asceticism, and furthered by Puritanism in England, accounts for this devotion to dirtiness. Physiology was an abhorred science; hygiene was not regarded as a means of salvation. The people rejoiced in uncleanliness. Nature's reproof came in the form of loathsome maladies that decimated the population. The Black Death ravaged the country, but it taught no lesson of rational physical living. On the contrary, the credulous populace traced in this plague a visitation of God upon them for their impiety, and the epidemic resulted in a greater growth of superstition. Priests

who had been prohibited from studying Aristotle, and profiting by the culture of the ancient world, were unable to render any real succour to the afflicted. The stricken died like flies, while the "fruitless fanes of prayer" resounded with supplications and masses.

Creighton's *Epidemics in Britain* gives an awful picture of the desolation wrought by the neglect of the body and the want of medical science. The monasteries, with their overcrowded burial grounds, wherein lay the bodies of generations of princes, nobles, and monks, were hotbeds of disease, and in the religious houses the Black Death found a congenial soil. About once in twenty years pestilence swept over London, destroying vast numbers of its inhabitants. Religious fervour was not directed towards the study of sanitation, and the teaching of cleanliness and ventilation as preventives of disease was unknown. During the Great Plague of 1665, the worst of the great epidemics, ten thousand persons died in one week, and in six months there were more than one hundred thousand deaths. The clergy fled to the country, though we are told that some of the Nonconformist ministers remained to preach and to visit the afflicted. But it is very doubtful whether any of these courageous ministers possessed the least knowledge of the cause and cure of the malady. Their concern was for men's souls, and they looked upon the plague as a divine punishment for sin and unbelief. We read that a weird man walked the streets by day and night, crying: "Oh, the great and dreadful God!"

The treatment of lepers in Great Britain was another instance of the ignorance fostered by pious bigotry. These wretched beings were hunted away from communities, left to die as "stricken deer or

winged birds." The treatment of madmen was even more callous. Theological teaching ascribed insanity to demonic possession, and this belief seems to have hardened men's hearts against the mentally affected. The only method of "cure" or exorcism was confinement in dark and filthy cells, flogging, and other kinds of torture. Exorcists were officers of the church from the earliest times, and exorcism was preferred to medical treatment. Disease was attributed to the malice of demons. Under Paganism there had been great advance in the healing art, but Christianity closed the schools of medicine, and denounced all science as sinful. In all human affairs we cannot fail to note the baneful effects of suppressing knowledge, nor overrate the fearful misery which zealous religionists inflicted upon mankind.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the great witch panic spread over Europe. The Bible prescribed the killing of witches, and as the mass of people of this period were steeped in superstitious dread of "the evil eye" and the malignant influence said to be exercised by certain aged or eccentric women, there was no difficulty in finding victims. There is not a blacker page in the annals of Protestant Christianity than this crusade against alleged witchcraft. Under the Catholic rule in England and Scotland, witch-burning was not common; but the mania of witch-hunting grew rapidly under Puritan auspices, and it is probable that Protestantism killed as many women for exercising supposed magic arts as the Inquisition burned men for heresy. "The crowning touch of horror," writes J. M. Robertson, "is the fact that in Protestant history for generations there is hardly a trace of popular compassion for the victims. In the north of

Catholic Italy there was a rebellion against witch-burning, perhaps because it was a part of the machinery of the Inquisition ; in the Protestant countries there was nothing of the kind. Luther, a man normally fond of children, was capable of advising that a ' possessed ' child should be thrown into the river to drown or be cured."

In 1643 thirty women were burned for witchcraft in Fife. The profession of " witch-finder " gave employment to a number of cruel fanatics. Among these Matthew Hopkins was eminently skilled. At his accusation sixteen hapless women were burned in a batch at Yarmouth in 1664. No single woman was safe from a charge of sorcery during the witch-panic, and those women who possessed some knowledge of curing for the sick were the most liable to indictment. The records of this madness are sickening. " Those who dared question the truth of even the most unreliable witnesses and the most monstrous statements were accused of atheism and infidelity," writes Mrs. Lynn Linton in her *Witch Stories*.

Many of the unhappy victims of this insane persecution were epileptics and demented subjects who needed medical treatment, while some were merely wrinkled dames of unprepossessing countenances. When a person died from a fever, due to undrained and unventilated dwelling houses, or to vicious living, the relations cast about for a cause of the death, and in thousands of instances the misfortune was ascribed to the malignant spells of an aged woman reputedly endowed with superhuman power. Then the mob clamoured for vengeance, and the wretched woman was haled before ignorant judges, and, after a sham trial, condemned to the flames. Very often there was

not even the farce of a trial, but the crowd took the law into its hands and wreaked revenge on the suspected beldame. These deeds were wrought by Christian men and women, under the approval of the Church, and in the name of the Founder of Christianity. Passages from the Old Testament were adduced as authority for these murders of undefended and unpitied women. It was a sin to doubt the existence of evil spirits, hobgoblins, wizards, and witches. Luther and Calvin taught that witches should be killed, and Wesley firmly believed in witchcraft. "I cannot give up to all the deists in Great Britain," wrote Wesley, "the existence of witchcraft till I give up the credit of all history, sacred and profane."

In 1584 Reginald Scot wrote the *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, in which he threw discredit upon the superstition of his time. The book was condemned by James I., who ordered that it should be burned by the common hangman. Thus the savagery of the age received royal countenance, and the witch-panic increased. No protests came from the pious; the reaction is to be traced to religious scepticism. The teaching of Rationalists gradually undermined the popular superstitious beliefs, and the more educated minds began to question the existence of witchcraft. Montaigne, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Lord Herbert, among other rational spirits, advocated the employment of reason as a test of all beliefs, and their doctrine was spread in the eighteenth century by Anthony Collins, Hume, Gibbon, Thomas Paine, and others.

The reformed Church of England had cast aside papal supremacy and certain forms of idolatry and ritual, but it set up in their place a fanatical reliance

upon "the infallible Scriptures," and the Bible became the sanction for all manner of persecutions and innumerable injustices. Bibliolatry was the new tyranny. Fires were still kindled for those who dared to dispute one word of the alleged inspired volume; tortures awaited all those who ventured to impugn the morality based upon unqualified acceptance of every text of the Bible as a revelation from God. Luther, Calvin, and Wesley each in their turn preserved the tradition of superhuman authority for conduct by substituting a book for a pontiff. Their refusal to examine the evidences for the plenary inspiration of the Bible was the primary error which led them into courses that the majority of orthodox believers of our times would adjudge as distinctly harmful to the cause of Christianity.

While the teaching of science and the counsels of enlightened reason were making for a higher morality, wider living, greater toleration, and deeper reverence for life, the dogmas of clerics and ministers condoned a multitude of sins, and taught the theory of escape from their consequences through the act of assent to certain theological propositions. Men went astray in private and social morals simply through that disastrous neglect of reason which piety had for centuries lauded as the foundation for belief. Faith was preached as the one thing needful. We have seen that faith failed to guide men in the attainment of civil peace, tolerance, enlightened legislation, social equality, compassion for the weak, kindness to animals, justice to criminals, proper care of the body, and culture of the mind as "preparation for complete living."

The position of woman under the Old Morality

affords another proof of its failure as a sane, humane social code. For centuries the exponents of Christianity enforced the teaching of St. Paul respecting women in its most literal sense. Under Catholicism the attitude towards woman was that of qualified aversion as a source of temptation. Woman, according to the Bible legend of Eden, was created for man, and endowed with charms of potential peril and fascination. She was for God through man, as Milton expresses it. St. Paul's conception of the sphere of women was an exceedingly narrow one, and his doctrine centres upon the duty of womanly humility and submission to masculine control. He praises celibacy, and merely tolerates marriage. The teaching of the celibate apostle was confirmed by the leaders of the early Christian Church, and abstinence from marriage was regarded as a supreme virtue. Tertullian said: "Woman, thou art the gate of Hell!" and St. Jerome taught that wedlock was a vice. In the sixth century the Council of Maçon discussed the question as to the existence of soul in woman. Marriage was viewed as a state of impurity, and woman stood as a symbol of uncleanness. St. Paul had denied the possibility of intellectual equality between men and women, and for ages women were crushed beneath a clerical despotism. Woman was shunned as a hindrance to the attainment of sanctity and the ascetic ideal of life. At the same time, the Church received much pecuniary support from its wealthy women converts, while many of the duties of tending the sick and ministering to the mourners were laid upon women.

The practice of celibacy had a wide influence upon the Church, and its tendency was towards licence and

depravity. Decadent Greece, in its worse days of excess, presents a fairer picture than the immorality of the eighth and three following centuries of the new faith. The records of priestly grossness are the more repulsive when we consider that ecclesiastics inculcated a continence which they rarely practised. Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* contains a mass of evidence proving the utter failure of the doctrine of complete abstinence, and the prevalence of hypocrisy which such indoctrination engendered. The unnatural restraints imposed upon men and women had their inevitable result in a spread of perverted instincts. Marriage was forbidden, but a system of sacerdotal concubinage took its place, while every form of disordered appetite characterised the life of the monasteries and nunneries. In such an atmosphere all kinds of morbid ecstasy flourished. The lives of Saint Teresa and many other devoted women plainly testify that repression of the natural yearnings of the heart results in hysterical pietism mingled with sensuality.

The one form of "immorality" which the Church most strongly condemned was secretly practised everywhere. This was a natural consequence of the view that woman was a temptation, and that love was degrading to the soul. Shut out from all intellectual communion with men, women became merely the drudges of society, and with the decrease of marriages a woman's choice of vocation lay between the cloister and the life of hetairism. We find that the two professions largely increased in numbers under the ascetic system. Yet the cruelest reprisals were inflicted upon women who had lapsed from virtue. Protestant Christianity was even more harsh than

Catholicism in its punishment of erring wives ; and as late as 1662, in New England, the Puritans visited the offence of conjugal infidelity with death. Cromwell decreed capital punishment for unfaithfulness, but there is no record that the law was carried out. Public opinion was gradually tending towards a higher sense of justice. One thing is certain : in the representation of woman as a synonym for impurity the Old Morality caused far more sexual vice than it prevented.

Christianity cannot justly claim that it raised the position of woman. In so far as latter-day Christians have approved of the principle of sex-equality in the State, and the higher education of women, they have been influenced by the protests first raised by Rationalists, and not by the New Testament teaching. To Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Shelley, Mill, the Owens, and other rational reformers, is due that measure of independence which modern English women enjoy in the community and the family. The emancipation of woman has progressed with the rationalisation of the national creed, and in spite of the emphatic counsels of womanly submission laid down in the epistles of St. Paul. And the betterment of woman's lot in civilised countries will proceed proportionately with the decline of clerical influence. Socialism, as a political system based upon human sanctions, has done more to elevate the status of women in a few generations than the Old Morality of supernatural authority achieved in this matter during thousands of years.

It is generally asserted that the ideals of family life and the home were raised through the new teaching of Christianity among the Romans. History,

however, does not support this assumption. The wives won in capture under the rule of Romulus were treated with quite as much consideration as the women of the Christian communities. Their labour was light, and they were exempt from criminal charges. The women of ancient Egypt had attained to an equality of rights with men, and Herodotus states that they were often in authority. With the reign of Constantine in Rome began a new era for women; but we certainly cannot trace any amelioration in the domestic life of the women converts to the new cult. The passage of the Gospels enjoining the hatred and desertion of parents and relatives, for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, was obeyed widely, and sons and daughters forsook their fathers and mothers, and wives separated from their husbands, in compliance with the creed. Throughout the centuries of monastic piety, multitudes of men and women neglected the duties of parentage and contemned the family life in order to immure themselves in the religious houses. When marriage is in disrepute, it would be strange if men esteem the founding of a family or the rearing of good citizens as a merit.

The institution of slavery, now almost universally condemned, was defended by the Old Morality until the present century. It is true that St. Paul taught kindness towards compulsory servitors; but the system of slavery was not denounced as a matter of principle among the followers of the apostle. The Pagan moralists were more insistent than the Christian reformer in the prescription of consideration for slaves, and laws had been passed for the protection of helots. In the fifth century slavery was not a better lot than it had been under Pagan rule; and in mediæval

times the institution was defended on the plea that a curse had been passed upon Ham. Mohammedans were forbidden to enslave persons of their own faith; but the ranks of Christianity were largely increased by slave-converts to the creed. John Stuart Mill, in his *Political Economy*, points out that the slavery of the Greek helots "seems to have been one of the least onerous varieties of serfdom." It is, therefore, an error to assume that the credit for raising the condition of slaves is entirely due to Christian doctrine; nor can that doctrine be taken as the true incentive to the modern repugnance to slavery. The protests against the custom in Christian countries were vehemently denounced by the orthodox. In our slave colonies we had followed the atrocious practice of working the serfs to death, and restocking the plantations with imported slaves, instead of adopting the slow and more costly method of breeding them.

Again, we find that Rationalism effected a great moral reform. The names of Paine, Theodore Parker, John Brown, Thoreau, and other humanitarian and Rationalistic thinkers, remind us that the movement for the freeing of negro slaves in America was in no sense set going under strictly orthodox doctrinal auspices. The agitation was, indeed, a heretical one, and the would-be suppressors of slavery were violently opposed by the mass of the people, advocates of freedom going in danger of their lives.

Many of the methods of imperial expansion and our conduct towards the subject races are distinctly condemned by the spirit of the New Morality. In the name of a "religion of love," we have "civilised" savage nations with the Gatling gun, invaded their lands, and reduced them to a condition of servitude

often as bad as that of slavery in America. The mysterious workings of natural law in the struggle for the survival of the fittest account for the decimation of primitive tribes upon contact with the more developed races. But the extermination of savage people by warfare is a method of barbarity that has had far too many apologists among the professors of a creed of "peace and goodwill." Mr. Kidd, in his *Social Evolution*, endeavours to convince his readers that "natural law" dooms the inferior races to extinction. It is quite "natural" that men of superior brain should impose upon, rob, and enslave untutored communities; but the growth of humanitarianism and justice is also a part of "natural" evolution, and it is vain to excuse wholesale murder and piracy on the plea that these are the operation of "natural law." In the history of colonisation how seldom do we discover that a spirit of strict equity has characterised the dealing of higher races with lower. How often have we made dangerous foes of amicable people, through insolence, tyranny, the infraction of treaties, interference with religious usages, undue taxation, and the enforcement of customs that are inimical to the health of primitive societies. The "righteousness that exalteth a nation" is seldom regarded as of paramount significance in the making of Christian empires. And one of the lessons which we are now compelled to heed—a lesson that we may have to learn in humility and penitence—is that no State can survive without a scientific system of ethics. No national crime goes unrequited. If we sow in violence and tyranny, we shall reap in subjection and decay.

The New Morality stands secure upon the knowledge

and experience gained from the age-long conflict between faith and reason. It strives to win for all men the right of free thought and honest speech, and it maintains that moral codes based upon fallacies result only in good actions when men instinctively recoil from the more dogmatic and superstitious beliefs comprised in their religion. Those who live in seeming obedience to a creed from which they eliminate all that is repugnant to them are infected by a spirit of eclecticism which is akin to pure Rationalism. Yet such Latitudinarians frequently find themselves in a perplexing and unstable position. Their apology is that what a man *does* is of much more importance than what he *believes*. This truism is so often repeated that it is necessary to examine it for a while.

If it is true that actions spring from beliefs, it must be obvious that the nature of the beliefs has effect in conduct—good or bad. We are told sometimes that false creeds can produce good conduct. Surely they can only do this in spite of the creed, and not as its result? Why, then, should we defend belief in error? Men who do not feel strongly on questions of truth or error, and who complacently reprove more earnest minds for “destroying belief,” reply that, after all, moral aspiration and right-doing are of supreme importance, and that beliefs count for little. If belief is a trifling matter, we can perceive no cause of complaint against shattering it. “But if it is a comfort or a help to believe unproven propositions, why not let people believe them?” asks the disputant. I unhesitatingly answer that this question cannot be put forward as a moral argument in defence of beliefs proved to be unfounded. It is the pleading of

indifferentism. It negates the morality of truth-seeking, in the first place, and it insults humanity by assuming that men and women are not capable of acting rightly if you deprive them of the solace of belief in dogmas which more enlightened minds have discovered as false and injurious.

The good man who believes in the exploded doctrine of the prevailing religion is good by virtue of an innate bias towards well-doing. When he refrains from lying, stealing, cruelty, and intolerant behaviour towards the men of other faiths, he does so through a love of truth-telling, a respect for honesty, a kind disposition, and a regard for the principle of liberty of thought. Moral virtue is largely a question of heredity, and the man endowed with "moral nerve" obeys the dictate of organisation, just as the congenital criminal follows the bias of his unfortunate heritage. The exemplary orthodox Christian of this type would be a virtue-esteeming man without any supernatural belief. As a Rationalist he would become a force of well-doing in fresh directions, and most probably his social activities would grow with the wider outlook of new thought. We must, however, judge the question of creeds on a wider basis. The example of high moral living, according to inner conviction, afforded in all superstitious faiths, does not prove the inherent truth nor the ethical utility of theological dogmas. There could be no such suggestion as "the failure of Christianity" if faith was the sure foundation for an ideal national life. Individuals, here and there, have stood conspicuous instances of the possibility of right civic and private conduct under the reign of irrational belief and immoral practices. We esteem a tree worthy of our preservation

when year after year, from its earliest productive age, its boughs have borne a rich yield of fruit. The tree that gives a few fruits at long intervals, whose branches produce only leaves and lichens in many seasons, we hew down and uproot, to clear the soil for a lustier sapling of a proven and ample-bearing stock.

The natives of India, China, South Africa, and other countries where the Christian gospel is taught by missionaries, undoubtedly find their religion a "comfort and help." But this does not prevent efforts to convert them to another form of belief. The missionary societies are assured that the comfort is at best poor, and the help of no avail, therefore they call for funds to support the work of demolishing savage faith. And it is just on the same pleading that the rational moralist endeavours to persuade the supernaturalist believer that the doctrines of science and of reasoned ethics can supply both solace for the ills of life and aid in the practise of virtue. Rationalism rightly esteemed is an inspiration and an enthusiasm for humanity. Surely there is sustenance in a system that desires all men to lead the completest moral and intellectual lives, to practise the Golden Rule in intercourse with their neighbours, and to war against injustice, oppression, social evils, and cruelty? Unless one wishes for future reward beyond the grave, I cannot see that supernatural religion affords a more powerful enthusiasm for righteousness. Even those who cling to belief in a Deity, who concerns himself with human affairs and evinces approval or disapprobation in respect of conduct, may best serve Him through serving their fellowmen.

The fear of provoking God's anger and its conse-

quences is hardly a noble motive for virtuous living ; and neither from the dread of divine retribution or from a desire for reward in heaven springs the best and purest impulse to well-doing. That impulse grows from a sense of responsibility towards one's fellow-men and the generations to come ; it is born of a love of the right for the right's sake. It was a "comfort" for the transgressor reared in the tradition of the Old Morality to lay his burden of sins at the feet of a sacrificed Christ, and to know that an act of assent to a dogma ensured remission for all offences, past and to come. But minds possessed of a finer moral perception cannot find solace and peace in such belief. They know that wrongdoing brings suffering upon the offender ; that there is no escape from the consequences of sin.

Even if it can be shown that acceptance of "revealed" religion ensures comfort to many, it can as readily be proved that the lives of a vast number of eminently devout men and women do not testify to the sterling solace of profound faith. Millions of Calvinists have endured almost continuous or life-long dreads and doubts concerning their "election." Millions have mourned for the unbelief of relatives and friends doomed to eternal torments in hell. Millions of Puritans have led austere and joyless lives from a mistaken conception of right living. Grief and dread cry from the pages of saintly men and women, and the records of insanity show that religious mania and melancholia are to be found in most asylums. Bunyan, Cowper, Hugh Miller, and Dr. Johnson, to mention a few great pietists, appear to have suffered deeply through doubts as to their sanctification and redemption.

If we are not to attempt to reason with believers in the orthodox creed, for fear of depriving them of consolation, I can find no justification for orthodox effort to convince Rationalists of their alleged errors. The minds that have earnestly sought for truth as a new lamp to the feet, men who have craved for more righteousness, are not able to keep silence when they have found a better way and a truer light. These do not rejoice in the wanton destruction of "simple faith." They call upon men to judge and see whether the new road and the new light are safer than the old. They have found their consolation in the hope of amelioration; in the belief that man has not fallen from a high estate, but arisen from a lowly origin; in the consciousness that they have patiently examined the ancient faith through the study of evidence for and against it, in the sense of intellectual freedom that comes as radiant sunshine and invigorating air after escape from the gloomy mists of ignorance, absolutism, and fallacy; and in the satisfaction that they are endeavouring to order their lives rightly in relation to their neighbours, without hope of any other reward than the realisation of obedience to the counsels of the wise, and heed to the promptings of a conscience made impressionable through close reflection upon right and wrong.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW INSPIRATION

Most Englishmen would agree that Dr. Johnson was a sincerely pious man. In his early days he was moved to serious reflection upon religion, and throughout his life of seventy-five years he endeavoured to practise the Christian duties. It is fair, therefore, to take Samuel Johnson as an instance of the influence of powerful faith upon conduct and opinion. "He was a sincere and zealous Christian," writes Boswell, "of high Church of England and monarchical principles, which he would not tamely suffer to be questioned." It is with no zest of detraction that I select Dr. Johnson as a type of mind prone to error through unqualified acceptance of theological morality as the highest guide for mankind. The bluff but good-natured scholar appeals to all of us in his biographer's account of his struggle with poverty and obscurity, his industry despite his chronic ailments, his consideration for the few of his near kin, and his forthright utterance of convictions. In such measure Johnson was a fine man.

With a reputation as the most learned man of his day, Dr. Johnson's responsibility towards society was great. And that he realised this responsibility is to his credit, for Boswell tells us that Johnson was frequently dissatisfied with the results of the talent with which God had endowed him. Here, then, is the portrait of an illustrious pious Englishman, firm in

his aspiration for righteousness and strong in the faith. His influence upon his age was doubtless wide; his example has been set up as a model for youth. Johnson was "prone to superstition, but not to credulity," says Boswell. We are not surprised, therefore, at the unphilosophic character of Dr. Johnson's belief. He was "above" the "philosophy and vain deceit" of Hume, Voltaire, Priestley, and other Rationalists, believing that "what is right is not so from any natural fitness, but because God wills it to be right." Upon this supernaturalist basis Johnson built up his ethical code.

One of the principles of this code was that "a man may shoot the man who invades his character." A second principle was that "the vulgar are the children of the State. If anyone attempts to teach them doctrines contrary to what the State approves, the magistrate may and ought to restrain him." This was said respecting Quakers, who were then undergoing persecution. A third principle allowed Johnson to vehemently abuse Scotchmen, Americans, and all foreigners, without offering any justification for this hatred of his fellow-men. A fourth principle forbade him to keep company with infidels, but permitted him to bear false witness against Lord Bolingbroke and David Hume. A fifth principle enabled him to condone Dr. John Campbell's disregard for truth-speaking, on the ground that he was "a solid orthodox man." A sixth principle sanctioned Johnson's brutal abuse of a young woman who had left the Church of England and joined the Quakers. A seventh principle led him to declare that "no honest man could be a deist." An eighth principle caused his defence of gambling. A ninth principle

urged him to advocate the flogging of children as the best means of quickening their intelligence. A tenth principle convinced Johnson that it was permissible to break the head of a man who differed from him in religious and political opinions.

The strength of Dr. Johnson's piety was only equalled by the intensity of his intolerance for other pietists. He admitted that the New Testament was "the most difficult book in the world"; but he would not allow that sincerity led other men to interpret it in a different sense from his own, and he denounced Hume and Priestley for seriously criticising the Christian dogmas in the interest of truth. His attitude towards the intellectual honesty that impels inquiry was almost invariably denunciatory. In regard to polity, religion, social customs, and the arts, Johnson declaimed always with the maximum of certainty and the minimum of scientific knowledge. His credulity continually militated against precision of thought, breadth of judgment, and sane pronouncements upon vital questions. The qualities that he lacked he made light of in other men. Frenchmen were "fools" because they were not Englishmen, and Voltaire was iniquitous because he questioned the evidences of revealed religion.

The anti-scientific bias of Dr. Johnson's mind is in a large measure displayed by his constant endeavour to reconcile the miraculous element of his creed with reason. He continually lost himself in metaphysical jungles. When Lord Monboddo advanced the view that primitive human beings probably walked on all fours, like quadrupeds, Johnson contemptuously dismissed the idea as sheer conjecture, and therefore "useless." Many of his more cultured contemporary

thinkers had devoted close research to the study of man; but biology and anthropology had little attraction for the Doctor. He condemned Lord Monboddo's "conjectures" concerning our early human ancestry; but in momentous subjects of belief and action he was content to found a didactic system upon simple surmises. Johnson's aversion to the scientific method was so profound that he flew into a passion at a chemical lecture when the name of Priestley was mentioned. He habitually exhibited a narrow and stubborn conservatism respecting social innovations and the investigations of science.

What remains of this gifted man's influence? His conversations, as recorded by Boswell, are exceedingly instructive to the student of culture-history. They reveal the limitations and the defects of a man who knew much, but understood comparatively little. We turn with a sense of relief from the vehement irrationality of the verbose Doctor to the calm, precise, and measured utterance of David Hume, a deep and original thinker. Hume's contributions to knowledge are permanent and great. Dr. Johnson talked while Hume thought.

One would naturally suppose that Johnson's profound faith in God's mercy brought life-long comfort. But it was not so. Few men of intellect have suffered so keenly from the dread of death and the hereafter as the devout Dr. Johnson. In his conversation with the liberal Dr. Adams, Johnson said, "with a look of horror, that he was much oppressed by the fear of death." He could not be sure that he was "accepted." "I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned," he groaned. Upon the same evening, as on other occasions, Dr. Johnson affirmed

that life was more miserable than happy. This chilling fear of death was frequently present in his mind, causing him many hours of extreme dejection. "I shall never be a Papist," he cried, "unless on the near approach of death, of which I have great terror.I would be a Papist if I could." In spite of his orthodox Protestant belief, this unhappy man wished that he could become a Roman Catholic, because in that Church "there are so many helps to get to heaven"! It would be difficult to find a more convincing instance of the failure of belief as a solace for the ills of this life, and as a hope of bliss in a future state. Instead of "comfort," we find that Johnson's devotion brought constant dreads, and accentuated his constitutional melancholy.

Had Dr. Johnson employed his reasoning power in an examination of the dogmas of his creed, he might have attained a happier state of mind, while the habit of rational thought would have immensely developed his logical faculty, and enlarged his sphere of usefulness as a moral teacher. But he repressed the spirit of inquiry, the voice that bids every man search and learn whether his beliefs are true. Mrs. Piozzi tells us that Dr. Johnson's mind was disturbed, "at the age of ten years," by "scruples of infidelity," and that he tried to read a book, *De Veritate Religionis*, but failed to understand the Latin. Boswell, however, declares this to be "a strange fantastical account of the original of Dr. Johnson's belief in our most holy religion," and describes the story as "one of the numerous misrepresentations of this lively lady." Johnson himself related that he began to think about religion at Oxford, and that, after reading Law's

Serious Call to a Holy Life, piety was "the predominant object of his thoughts."

Dr. Johnson's striving after righteousness seems to have arisen solely from a terror of divine wrath. It is lamentable that such a vigorous mind could not conceive of the possibility of doing good for the sake of goodness, and that the dread of superhuman punishment in a legendary place of torment was the stimulus to his acts of benevolence. Johnson believed that men are born so corrupt that "all the laws of heaven and earth are insufficient to restrain them from crimes." Therefore, to propitiate the Creator of these corrupt beings, a human sacrifice was necessary, and vicarious punishment was imposed upon the Creator's own Son. Is it strange that the consolation of such a creed should fail? Johnson could never feel perfectly assured that his Deity had been appeased. "No man can be sure that his obedience and repentance will obtain salvation" was his pitiable fear. "A man cannot be sure himself that he has divine intimation of acceptance," he cries. Yet, suffering as Dr. Johnson did from continual doubts and terrors, he could speak of the calm Rationalism of Hume, Gibbon, and Priestley as "this gloom of infidelity."

It is, indeed, pathetic to read of this God-fearing man "hurried into indulgences which he thought criminal," urged to defend violence and intolerance, and beset with horror at the reflection that his belief in redemption might after all prove unavailing. We picture him torn with remorse for the offence of pouring milk into his tea on Good Friday; we see him on his bed of death, imploring Sir Joshua Reynolds "never to use his pencil on a Sunday"; and

we cannot but admire the sincerity with which he enforced his principles, and the superb effort to overcome his fear at meeting God. "Brave old Samuel"! Yet we cannot but realise that his piety and superstitious leanings misled his judgment on many wide issues, narrowed his authority as a moral teacher, and intensified his morbidity and melancholy. The rational spirit of his age never infected him. He chose to remain stubbornly reactionary in thought, while others proclaimed the new and the higher morality. Could he revisit earth, he would learn that the dogmas which caused so great a conflict in his soul have been abandoned by all save the unreflective or illiterate. The "transient infidelity" which he deplored has proved a moral quickening for millions in Europe, and its effect has not been that of "gloom," but as the inspiring hope that comes with a splendid summer dawn. The heresy of his day is the accepted truth of the present. Johnson's ethics are doomed to decay.

We speak of the "faith of our fathers," and learn in the home and the school that it is our duty to obey the doctrines of that faith. But there is no such thing as an absolutely stable and permanent religious belief. Religion is constantly modifying and reconstructing its creeds. In the past hundred years the Christian Church has abandoned several of its dogmas, explained away some of the superstitions, cast doubt upon the meaning of Biblical passages which were formerly accepted in a literal sense, and rejected much of that purely material element which led our forefathers to believe in the existence of devils with hoofs and tails, a fiery pit prepared for the ungodly, the resurrection of human physical bodies buried ages

ago, the malign influence of witches, demonic possession, and to credit many other baseless assumptions and primitive surmises. "Heresies," which would have aroused Dr. Johnson to angry censure upon the utterers, are now proclaimed in most of the churches of the Capital and in the big cities of the Kingdom.

The new spirit of the age was beginning to dominate the finest minds in Johnson's time. Hume was teaching men to seek for evidence before committing themselves to belief in miraculous interferences with the order of nature. Priestley had devoted his life to scientific research and to the quest for a higher moral light. Adam Smith was instructing his generation in the causes of wealth and poverty, and proving how the subservience of philosophy and science to theology brought about enormous evils and inequalities in society. Gibbon's great work on *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was about to strike a heavy blow at superstition and fallacy, by showing that faith alone cannot save nations from decadence. In France and Germany scholars were beginning to criticise the supernaturalism of Christianity, thus preparing the way for Renan and Strauss, and in England for Bishop Colenso, Professor Newman, and Matthew Arnold. In 1793 Thomas Paine stirred up masses of men to rational reflection upon religious questions, and his *Age of Reason* became the text-book of popular freethinking.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the innovators of thought of this period were universally acclaimed by their fellow-men. The power of the State and the Church was employed against them in the historic fashion, and, as in the old days of the conflict between science and religion, persecution, slander, and ostracism beset earnest moral

philosophers, scientific discoverers, and social reformers. There were thousands always ready to carry out Johnson's principle of breaking heads; and the jurists and officials, who are usually on the side of popular beliefs, for diplomatic reasons, gave countenance to shameful acts of persecution and mob violence. When the Old Morality could not answer a political or religious opponent, it knocked him down and kicked him. The slanders circulated concerning the Rationalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries form a very curious study of the methods of bigoted piety. Moncure Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* contains a refutation of a number of calumnies directed against this honest and courageous man by ignorant enemies, both among the clergy and laity. The more strenuous and convincing reformers were naturally those who were singled out by the fanatical for bitter attack. Sometimes the attack was controversial and impersonal. Then only was it fair dialectic. But very often onslaught was made in the way of gross defamation of character, malicious misrepresentation of opinion, and actual physical violence at the instigation of the clergy.

Priestley was mobbed in Birmingham for his Unitarian teaching. His house, his books, and his scientific instruments were burned by a savage crowd. In 1791 the clergy said that, if Priestley were mounted on a pile of his books, they would set fire to them and burn him alive. We need not wonder that the mob carried out part of this murderous proposal, after incitement by their spiritual guides. Priestley emigrated to New England, where he was welcomed and honoured. His townsmen had shown him the basest ingratitude for his valuable researches and his efforts

to humanise society. No more impressive instance of the progress of tolerance through rational influence can be afforded than the fact that the Birmingham of to-day honours in its citizen, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, a disciple of the very doctrines for which Priestley was almost done to death at the close of the eighteenth century.

During the reign of George IV. booksellers were sentenced to cruel terms of imprisonment for selling books containing such Theistical teaching as may now be heard every week in many of the chapels of dissenting sects. Every Sunday clergymen of the High and the Broad sections of the Established Church enunciate views that would have led to imprisonment a hundred years ago. Rationalism has even succeeded in making the State less intolerant of new opinions. We have probably seen the last prosecution of a Free-thinker. The merit is not due to a Church which has systematically opposed education among the people. The thanks of the community are not to be claimed by a hierarchy that prosecuted Hannah More for opening day schools for the children of the neglected industrial classes of her day, nor to modern clerics who talk of "godless education," "desolating scepticism," and the "sin of unbelief." All that is broad and liberal in the orthodoxy of our time is directly traceable to the spirit of Rationalism working through the example and teaching of seceders from the dogmatic creeds. All the tendencies that make for better social conditions, a more equitable distribution of the wealth of the country, representative government, and education have been set moving beneath the disapproval and against the obstructing influence of clericalism. "Show me a single victory

for humanity that has not been won by the people for the people," says Hall Caine, "and often in the face of the Churches. I know of none."

Every thinker who has openly questioned the claims of the Old Morality, and suffered for his opinions; every man who has incurred accusations of "sedition" in the effort to gain more freedom for humanity, and every biological investigator who has increased our knowledge of man's origin and place in nature, has stirred the public mind, and impelled the orthodox absolutism to yield concession after concession. The resistance and the aloofness of the Church have had to give way to the innovating thought which threatened to wreck the great citadel of belief and the ponderous edifice of academic authority. Kingsley lived to see Darwin "conquering everywhere." Were the canon alive to-day, he would find the attitude of the Church one of attempted reconciliation between supernaturalistic morality and the destructive scientific truths which it cannot suppress.

During the present century victory has marked the progress of knowledge. Discoveries in embryology, the evolutionary account of man's origin, the evidences of geology, the development of psychology, and the scientific—and therefore thorough—revision of the "revealed" Bible have entirely upheaved the fundamental and conventional ideas concerning man and his relation to the world in which he is placed. We know now beyond question that man is closely related to the higher mammals. "The differences between man and the great apes are not so great as are those between the man-like apes and the lower monkeys," said Professor Huxley. Every year fresh proof of this near kinship is being added to the mass of

evidence collected by Lamarck, Darwin, Büchner, Haeckel, Gegenbaur, Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and many other assiduous investigators. In 1894 Eugen Dubois, a Dutch army doctor, discovered the fossil remains of a man-like ape in Java. Professor Haeckel, in his old age, asserts that this discovery supplies the last link in "the chain of primates, which stretches unbroken from the lowest catarrhinæ to the highest-developed man."

The mass of educated persons in the Western nations now accept the Darwinian theory of man's descent. Most of the opponents of the theory are among the laggards in the advance of thought, who have not given it their careful study. They scout the wisdom of painstaking and truth-loving men of science, just as their class of the pre-scientific era derided the assumptions of Galileo and Copernicus. We can only recommend the people who still say that Darwin was a mere speculative thinker to find time to read and consider the works of evolutionists before they affect mirth at a theory which they do not understand. For the thoughtful the discovery as to man's heredity opens out a vast and wonderful vista of hope for the future of humanity. They no longer believe that man is born a corrupt, degraded, and lost creature, but that human beings are possessed of a social instinct, and capable of realising, through moral education, that a man cannot injure his neighbours without injuring himself. The ideal of the religions of Confucius, Buddha, the Greeks, and of Christ, that we should "do unto others as you would that they should do unto you," is quite compatible with this belief in human descent. "In this greatest and highest commandment our monistic ethics is

completely at one with Christianity," writes Professor Haeckel, in *The Riddle of the Universe*.

We are moving upwards, "working out the beast," as Tennyson has it. There is no need to cringe beneath the supposed ire of a vengeful God, who has created us full of sins and iniquities. The offences which we commit will assuredly bring their penalty. If we are idle, we shall reap in want or *ennui*; if we deal violence, we shall encounter violence; if we lie, we shall earn the distrust of our neighbours; if we abuse our bodies, we shall suffer illness and premature old age; and in whatever way we contravene the laws of social instinct, as embodied in the code of the community, we shall be requited by nature. The life of the anti-social man cannot be happy. To gain happiness we must diffuse joy around us.

When we look around in our circle of friends and acquaintances, and notice instances of moral failure, disappointment with life, sorrow, and weariness, how often we may discover that the source of trouble is in a lack of knowledge. It is just this constant contact with unavoidable evil, disease, and pain that leads the reflective observer to the conclusion that there is no sin but ignorance. We have been taught that well-doing is of "the spirit" and "the emotions," and not of the reasoned judgment that is born of culture. Without minimising the sway of pure emotion, nor forgetting its usefulness, it is well to remember that emotion needs the control of reason. To *know* rightly helps one to *do* well. This is the basic truth of rational morality.

I may, perhaps, be pardoned for repeatedly insisting upon this necessity for *knowing*. Culture, in its best sense, is not a pastime for intellectual minds. It is

development of the best, the highest, the purest in oneself, through mental discipline and training. A share of misery falls to each of us, and at times the world appears "a theatre of strife." But we often fail to estimate the amount of preventable suffering and wrong-doing in our own lives, and in the lives of others. Through our terrible system of pseudo-education thousands of men and women grope their painful way to the grave amid the swamps, briars, and pitfalls of fallacy. A lack of sane knowledge of the functions of the body, and of the nature and manifestations of the powerful instinct that unites the sexes in marriage, is the cause of a widespread and intense suffering. This ignorance is especially manifest in the women of our race, and it leads to the wreckage and tragedy of many lives. The Old Morality distinctly fostered every form of misunderstanding, and offered every possible counsel of unreason in this important matter. Even to-day it is almost impossible to penetrate the darkness of this pervading ignorance with a ray of light. Asceticism, Puritanism, and spiritualistic conceptions have built an awful barrier of prejudice respecting the spread of wholesome teaching on this vital question.

Much of our avoidable suffering and illness is attributable to an appalling ignorance of the rules of healthy living. We have seen how mediæval piety obstructed the progress of sanitary and medical knowledge by proscribing science and despising the body. This spirit of the Dark Ages still lingers in remote parts of the kingdom, and even in the large towns. In the West of England, among the peasantry, and in Wales, I have met with singular instances of ignorance concerning the care of the body in health and sickness,

domestic sanitation, and the need for cleanliness. I have heard a labourer's wife refuse to isolate a child suffering from scarlet fever, on the ground that if it was "ordained" for the other children to take the infection, they would do so, in spite of any sanitary precautions. The epidemics of enteric fever, small-pox, and other diseases that strike terror in parts of the country, are usually to be traced to the gross ignorance and carelessness of persons who have not been taught the first essentials of sanitation.

A system of education that subordinates physiology to the study of dead languages, grammar, and mathematics is utterly faulty and inadequate as a "preparation for complete living." The neglect of the natural sciences in schools and colleges is a national disgrace. But so long as ecclesiasticism dominates public school and university education there can be no great advance in the highest and widest forms of culture. The deplorable ignorance of life exhibited by many men who have distinguished themselves in academic learning is the plainest evidence of the irrationality of the conventional system of education. Our educational code fails to further that all-round culture of the powers of observation, memory, and reflection which can alone fit men for careers of civic usefulness. I have met a solicitor, with a large practice, who did not know what the word "psychology" means, and could not pronounce it. And I have seen men sitting on juries, to decide upon difficult cases, whose untrained intelligence was quite unable to follow and weigh evidence, and to understand more than half of the phrases used by the judge in his summing-up and address to the jury.

Our jurists are, as a class, woefully ill-instructed

in human nature. They do not prepare themselves for their responsible offices by wide reading of standard works of psychology, neurology, pathology, and criminology. As Haeckel says, "most of the students of jurisprudence" neglect "the very first requisites for a correct estimate of human nature." Legislators, in the main, are quite as incompetent as the mass of jurists to form clear and sound views upon politics. The benches of Parliament are filled, for the greater part, with socially ambitious men who seek prestige or the gratification of a yearning for power. The students of humanity and of sociology are decidedly in the minority among the elected representatives of the people. Our clergy, the accepted custodians of morality, are perhaps the least widely cultured of the so-called educated classes. As a body they are extra-scientific or anti-scientific. Hundreds—probably thousands—of them have never acquainted themselves with the evolutionary theory, the rudiments of physical science, and the new thought that is reforming moral opinion and social conduct. They live remote, in a kind of mediæval atmosphere, environed by survivals of the ages of superstition, and out of touch with the vast intellectual movement of to-day.

Many are earnest, conscientious men ; some are the self-sacrificing servants of the poor and the sick of their flocks. But their influence for good ends practically with their alleviation of the sufferings of poverty. As sources of enlightenment as to the removal of the inequalities of society, as fine examples of complete living, and as guides to the highest attainable standards of rectitude, they entirely fail as a body. Even in the matters of information regarding

the founding of Christianity, hierology generally, and the results of the Higher Criticism of the Bible, the ministers of the Gospel are in the mass no better instructed than the members of their congregations.

The gravest charge that can be brought against the official teachers of the organised religion of our country is that of a lingering and wholly reactionary hostility to the spread of real culture. Clerics of the Established Church long to control the elementary education of the young, in order to ensure the full allegiance of the coming generations to the tenets of the State-subsidised faith. The effort is a natural one. We only protest when clericalism endeavours to carry out the arbitrary method of imparting church doctrine to *all* children, whether they happen to be the children of Dissenters, Jews, or Freethinkers, and when the young are compulsorily instructed in those dogmatic evangelical notions which the leading intellects of the Church have explained away. The system of moral instruction of the young, as initiated by the ethical societies of the United Kingdom, supplies all that is necessary for right guidance in the conduct of life. But the orthodox would impose the teaching of a set of dogmas which are in reality the theological accretions of the simple and all-embracing Golden Rule proclaimed by all the great religions and moral teachers up to the time of Christ. The consensus of the highest intellectual opinion is opposed to moral theories derived from the mystical accumulations upon Christianity, on the ground that they fail to supply any high stimulus and guide for right conduct.

As Mr. J. Allanson Picton points out in his booklet, *The Bible in School*, we cannot instil the finest

morality by presenting to the minds of the young two pictures of the world—one as conveyed by daily experience, and the other as it is drawn in Bible narratives of miraculous interventions of the Deity and the dogmas of the Fall and the Atonement. Many teachers find themselves in the perplexing situation of propounders of mythical moral sanctions, and exponents of doctrines that they cannot honestly accept. If their pupils question them, the teachers must either tell the truth, and risk their positions by an avowal of heterodox views, or descend to dissimulation in their "explanations." A teacher refers to the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, and finds that the neo-Christianity, in Mr. Picton's words, "does not insist on the literal historical truth of the nativity of Jesus, or of his miracles, or resurrection, or ascension." Yet the schoolmaster is bound to treat the life of Jesus as a matter of accurate history, and in direct contradiction to the authoritative conclusions of the Rev. D. Abbot and Canon Cheyne. The effect of this deception can only prove morally injurious to both the teacher and the taught.

While moral lessons can be based upon the Bible, the book is not to be regarded as a fetish and the sole repository of ethics. The example of many of the Old Testament characters is not morally edifying to the young. "We have proof in the Bible," writes Herbert Spencer, "that apart from the lying that constituted false witness, and was to the injury of a neighbour, there was among the Hebrews but little reprobation of lying." Many acts of cruelty, injustice, and deception are justified in the Hebrew Scriptures. "The true, the good, and the beautiful," the trinity of the new inspiration, were not always worshipped.

by the authors of the Biblical legends. The Mosaic code contained some moral commands and some flagrantly unjust punishments for trivial misdemeanours. An indiscriminate use of the Bible as a moral guide has led men to the perpetration of countless sins. The advocates of religious persecution, the defenders of devastating wars, the apologists for slavery, the antagonists of knowledge, the upholders of poverty, the inflictors of cruelty upon criminals, supposed witches, "possessed" persons, and brutes, the champions of despotic government, and the teachers of the submission of women as "the inferior sex," have all found sanction for their conduct in "the revealed Word of God."

The New Morality is "religious" in every sense but the superstitious. It values emotion, enthusiasm, devotion to the right, charity, and the essence that remains of extinct and existing religions after rectification in the process of historical and moral criticism. Rational morality, founded on the cumulative experience and wisdom of the ages, is bound to reject the erroneous and the immoral; but in doing this it deprives no one of vital belief. There are mysteries which it does not essay to explain; there are problems for which it refuses to offer facile solutions. In regard to the unanswerable, it maintains the right attitude of agnosticism, and declines to dogmatise. It has faith in human reason, but not in human infallibility. The New Morality, in the labour of reconstruction, is forced into conflict with the conservators of the old order. But the new moralist employs only the method of pacific suasion, and detests the usage of force. The reactionary forces of the community may complain that the new beliefs upheave the

foundations of faith. If those foundations were secure and unassailable, the edifice could not suffer from the decay which is so evident to any intelligent observer.

"Our system of government, of administrative justice, and of national education, and our entire social and moral organisation, remain in a state of barbarism," says Professor A. R. Wallace. In a broad sense this is true. But I have endeavoured to show that enthusiasm for higher ideals of government, justice, education, and social morality is spreading among earnest and thoughtful men and women of the day, and that the promise is fairer than it was a hundred years ago. Science has conquered all along the line of battle with superstition and unreason. And to the opponents of science, who do not justly appreciate the immense services which it has rendered them, we can best reply in the words of Professor Ludwig Büchner: "A society which permits human beings to die of starvation on the steps of houses filled with victuals—a society whose force is directed to oppress the weak by the strong, has no right to complain that the natural sciences subvert the foundations of its morality."

CHAPTER V.

EDUCATION IN COMPLETE LIVING

WE may now indicate the method of training a child in the principles of the New Morality. Let us suppose that the parents thoroughly realise their great responsibility in bringing a new human life into the world. They will resolve to spare no endeavour towards fitting the child for complete living, and to this end they will, from the time of birth, closely observe the development of the infant's body and mind. If one of the parents comes of a stock with a tendency to consumption, great care will be exercised in strengthening the child's respiratory organs and whole system, by means of rational calisthenics, a constant supply of fresh air in the nursery and sleeping-room, and attention to diet, while every encouragement will be given to the child to spend the larger part of its earlier years in healthful outdoor amusements. The bent of the boy's mind will be studied by both parents, with a view to preparation for a commercial, professional, or artistic career. All attempts to force children into distasteful occupations will be abandoned by the rational educationist as the worst kind of policy.

For instance, if the father is a successful solicitor or a prosperous tradesman, he will not coerce an adventurous, restless lad into the law or trade against his inclination. The boy has the making of a good

colonist or of a sailor, and it is useless to drive "a round nail into a square hole." If the youth is dreamy, imaginative, studious, and artistic, he will not develop into a practical, shrewd, and enthusiastic man of business. On the other hand, the child who shows marked intelligence in one special direction, while he is deficient in other interests, will be encouraged to train his less developed faculties. The main object of parental and scholastic education will be cultivation of the powers of observation and reflection as a basis for moral judgments.

Schopenhauer says truly that the child is a genius. The frank, innocent curiosity and the interest that most children exhibit in all the objects around them, in natural phenomena, and the ways of adult persons, are of the same order of impressionability as that of genius. An observant and thoughtful child longs to know the truth about everything. He is told that God made the world. He asks, "Who made God?" Primers and catechisms are given to him. The child begins to question the statements of the writers, and to evince a natural and thoroughly healthy scepticism. He is told that he must not question, but *believe*. From his earliest years he is counselled to accept propositions without understanding them, and no serious effort is made to explain the "why" of things. No wonder that we have so few thinkers in our society! The child is taught not to think, but to accept. In the course of his education many falsehoods are repeated to him by parents and teachers, who deem it permissible to tell untruths upon certain matters. When he is older, he discovers that he has been deceived, and many years of unlearning succeed the years of so-called tutelage. In manhood he is forced

to unlearn the traditional fallacies with which he was imbued in the home and the school.

The New Morality will encourage the young to see, to think, to examine, to inquire, and to judge. Children will not be snubbed for asking pertinent questions; they will not be told lies in the interests of "purity" and "morality." They will not be sent to school to Mrs. Grundy's seminary and to Mr. Podsnap's academy. Reasoning parents will foster reasoning children before they are sent to qualified rational pedagogues. Under the present system we rear prigs and weaklings instead of earnest and humble students and inquirers. We teach the absolute infallibility of the Bible, and its superiority over all the bibles and other sacred and moral writings of the world; we preach the supremacy of insular virtue, and engender vulgar prejudice against the people of other great nations and rising republics, and thus we set up an example of arrogant assurance utterly inimical to true culture.

The child who is taught to see will discover a hundred added delights to existence. A country walk, a railway or steamboat journey, a visit to the sea-shore, will be made opportunities for culture. Children who groan at the prospect of committing pages of school books to memory will find pastime in daily observation of nature and of mankind, and those object-lessons will prove of the highest educational value. It is easy to interest almost any boy or girl in stones of the quarry, rocks of the coast, and fossils from the limestone, if the instruction is regarded as a part of recreation. Most children are deeply interested in animals, and this interest may be turned to account by showing human relationship to the

brutes, and tracing back human morality to its origin in the brave wren defending her brood in the nest; the unselfish dog, who allows the kitten to drink from his saucer of milk; and the willing and industrious horse, who comes neighing from the pasture at the call of the ploughman. Flowers are also a source of pleasure to children, and from the plants of the hedgerow, woodland, and heath they may learn many things concerning the reproduction and life of animals and men. No better and more beautiful way of teaching the young certain essential facts can be conceived than through the life-history of the flowers.

In these play-lessons of geology, natural history, and botany, the parents will prepare the mind of the child for a more technical instruction. The rudiments of human physiology may be taught in the same interesting fashion, and a reverence for the body, thus fostered at an early age, will prove one of the finest safeguards to physical and moral health. We have noted how depravity and suffering are increased when men regard the body with indifference and contempt. Physiology is wholly humane. It teaches us to respect "soul," and to reject the gross material conceptions foisted upon mankind by an ignorant priesthood. We can never understand the soul until we understand the body.

In the town, as in the country, parents will find plenty of valuable object-lessons for the young child. When the child observes many poor, ill-clad, and underfed persons in the thoroughfares of rich cities, he will not be told the terrible falsehood that poverty is an ineradicable evil, permitted by a beneficent God in His inscrutable wisdom. He will be taught that

the nation which allows millions of its toilers to drag out a wretched existence on the verge of starvation, while thousands riot in idleness and luxury, stands morally condemned in the eyes of all good men. No specious arguments will be employed to prove that poverty is "blessed," and that the poor will reap their reward in a future life; but the child will learn that such assurances have been given by selfish priests, in league with rich and selfish men of high estate, to dupe the suffering to content. And the parent will tell the child that, when more men and women realise their responsibility for this vast evil, want will be banished and the hungry everywhere fed.

The museums, art galleries, and theatres of the large towns are educational institutions which we neglect to use properly. A child is taken to the British Museum and hurried through the rooms in an hour or so. He is bewildered by the profusion of interesting objects, and he leaves the place without learning anything. Children should be taken frequently to the museums and picture exhibitions, and allowed to spend a reasonable amount of time in looking at the objects and paintings that most interest them. They should see a part of the collection at each visit, instead of hurrying through the galleries, without really inspecting a single case. Although we are behind the Continental nations in recognising the educative value of the stage, there are a few plays produced in England which lead to serious reflection on life, and provide moral inspiration. As soon as children are old enough to appreciate the theatre, they should be taken by their elders to see good plays, and invited to talk about them. There will, of course, be no foolish vetoes upon play-going for simple

amusement. We should aim at encouraging laughter and merriment as well as grave reflection. Mirth is healthy, and the Puritans who endeavoured to repress it wrought great mischief in the community.

Physical exercise will be made a part of the rational education of the young. Every boy and girl will learn to swim. The habit of systematic exercises for developing the body will be formed by the example of the parents, and every hobby and taste that lead children into the open air will be encouraged. Prudence will correct the tendency to overstrain of the frame, and to undue indulgence in sports, which many young men exhibit. We live in an age of brain, and mere muscle will have to give way to intellect in the struggle for existence. The dull-witted athlete may possess a splendid muscular development; but he cannot acquit himself in the race of life, and compete fairly with the man who aims at harmonious cultivation of body and mind. There are signs to-day in some sections of our society of a deterioration of character and mental power through excessive devotion to sports and pastimes. But all games and recreations that tend to promote vigour of body, grace of carriage, and indifference to the rigours of climate and the changes of atmosphere are good for the rearing of fine men and women. The girl who learns to overcome a finical dislike of rough winds, rain, and cold is invariably more robust than her physically indolent and timid sisters who pass the greater part of their leisure time in over-heated and ill-ventilated rooms. Questions of hygienic living will be more intelligently discussed by women reared in the principles of the New Morality. If women abstain, on the score of morality, health, and

æsthetics, from a free use of alcoholic drinks, they will also refrain on the same grounds from injuring their bodies by tight-lacing. Our duty towards posterity will become a sacred canon of the higher creed. We shall shrink with shame and horror from the thought of immortalising our vices through heredity.

We come now to a consideration of the more didactic ethical training of the young generation. Moral science will be part of the school curriculum, but ethics will not be based upon superstitious beliefs. We shall inculcate faith in the careful hypotheses of science, in meliorism, and in the principle of evolutionary progress. This faith must be distinguished from the religious faith of the Old Morality. The new faith will not oppose reason in any act of assent, nor will it assume supernatural powers and happenings. We shall not contradict all reason and experience when we profess faith in "a provisional hypothesis." Our faith will represent trust in thoughtful assumptions that gain a right from the fact that many of the past postulates of science can now be proved as established truth. But our faith will be at all times a critical and rational faith. We shall sternly refuse to credit the miraculous and supernatural as *causes*.

In directing the young in the path of rectitude, we shall teach that sin brings its own punishment, both to individuals and to nations, and proof of this truth will be adduced from human history, sacred and profane, from the writings of genius, the great poems, dramas, and romances of various nations. In our insistence upon the absolute necessity for intellectual truth, we shall greatly elevate the standard of truth-speaking in commercial and private affairs. We shall offer no defence for "the business lie," but show how

commerce brings its own ruin when its practices are corrupt. In short, our whole teachings will tend to prove that the life of happiness and completeness is impossible without assiduous cultivation of virtue, veneration for high principle, kindness to our neighbours, to the unfortunate, and to helpless animals, charity in our attitude towards human frailty, and strict probity in matters of business.

In instilling a zest for virtue we shall refrain from all methods of correction which estrange the affection of the child from the parent or the tutor. Our methods of training will be patience and love. We shall not stint in commendation. Children, and men also, often conduct themselves as their neighbours judge of them. If you incessantly tell a spirited and somewhat refractory boy that he will "come to no good," that he is hopelessly wicked, abnormally idle, and incurably stupid, he will sink into a state of utter indifference or of callous hatred. Such a mode of so-called "training" frequently results in the ruin of a child's life. Our present conventional home and school education is singularly inadequate on the moral side. We simply content ourselves with handing down pious dogmas and repeating copy-book maxims. We make no careful study of a child's temperament; we drive when we should lead, and we resort to incessant censure and forms of punishment that evoke childish resentment and distrust. Many children are terrified into a habit of lying through the harsh severity of their guardians; and many a reckless, dissipated man leads a career of folly and wantonness through reaction from the unnatural and demoralising austerities and paltry inhibitions of a Puritanic home.

When selecting our authorities for moral instruction

we shall not restrict ourselves to any specified source of "infallibility." The kernel of the highest morality has been hidden for thousands of years in the shell of superstitious accretions. Five hundred years before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Chinese moralist, Confucius, said : " Do to every man as thou would'st have him do to thee ; and do not to another what thou would'st not have him do to thee." This noble conception of the whole duty of man was enunciated by several great teachers long before the Christian era. Christ was among the many who have pronounced this rule. The inspiration for this Golden Rule of Morals came spontaneously to many earnest moral minds, and this fact should convince us of its truth, and its power of application at all times and in all societies. Seneca, Aristotle, Thales, and Marcus Aurelius taught the same spirit of justice, sympathy, honesty, and charity. We eliminate this universal injunction from the mass of error that has practically stifled it in the teaching and practice of the Christian faith, and we may safely repeat it as a great formula of a rational system of moral instruction for the young.

The question whether parents of the new conviction should dissuade their children from attending places of worship dedicated to the Old Morality must be decided by an appeal to individual conscience and judgment. Personally, I hold the view that violent coercion in this matter is exceedingly injudicious, and apt to set up a natural revolt in the minds of young or adult persons. Under the strictest rule of the Old Morality church-going was compulsory. I do not believe that anyone, child or man, can be compelled to worship ; and, as worship is the ostensible purpose

of church or chapel attendance, it seems folly to induce any person to enter a place of worship unless the mind is in a state of reverence and adoration. Many of us suffered much as children by being forced to attend long services at church or chapel. But it is easy to conceive of the setting-up of an intense desire to participate in religious ceremonies in the bosom of a child who has been sternly forbidden to enter a place of worship. The whole principle of Rationalism is opposed to fanatical methods, and I cannot see that any moral good can accrue from a positive inhibition in respect of religious worship. We do not desire to emulate the example of an institution that formerly punished absentees from church.

If a child is left to follow his own inclination concerning attendance at services, curiosity may occasionally lead him to church. But when his parents abstain from the hypocrisy of taking part in superstitious ceremonies, and repeating propositions that outrage their moral sense, the child will, in most cases, employ the Sunday in reading and recreation. On the other hand, if a young man comes under orthodox influence, and begins to exhibit emotional yearnings towards the old faith, the parents will do ill if they essay any kind of force to restrain him from belief. We can but make appeal to the reason and the conscience, and show by example the "more excellent way" of the New Morality.

The foregoing passages suggest reflection upon the outward adherence to the customs of religious worship at the present time. Clergymen complain that many of the churches are only half filled with worshippers on a Sunday; but new places of worship are constantly erected, and, in spite of the falling-off in

attendance at services, an immense number of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom take part in public worship with more or less regularity. Among these apparently orthodox church-goers there are many who privately dissent from the doctrines and views uttered from the pulpits. One cannot look around among one's circle of acquaintances without finding several to whom church attendance is a mere matter of social form, and in no sense a religious obligation. Some of these attendants at church will tell you that they go to hear sermons in order to avoid the unpleasant suggestion of "infidelity," or of disrespect to religion, which their constant absence would evoke. They defend their morally untenable theory on the plea that such suspicion would imperil their success in a profession or trade. While a vestige of the spirit of persecution remains we shall find a proportion of men and women who elect to stultify their consciences in this manner. But the finer, and more desirable, neophytes of the New Morality will not attempt to juggle with their reason and to nullify the higher dictates of conscience in such forms of lip-service. They will plainly state that their presence in church, except as spectators, would be a mockery.

There is no question that the majority of worshippers have never seriously examined the evidences of their faith. From the outside point of view this fact is distressing. But we have to realise that, while *belief* is regarded as the highest moral attitude, and *doubt* as dangerous, if not sinful, it is natural that millions should be unable to give a reason for the faith that is in them. The bulk of men and women accept religious teaching as easily as they conform to a host of conventions of lesser importance. Nothing

save the spread of sound culture can convince the mass of the truth of W. K. Clifford's contention that if a man has no time to inquire into the verity of his creed he ought not to have time to believe.

It may be well at this stage to review the present position of the old faith in the light of modern Biblical criticism. To-day certain theological critics of the German school have gone as far in the work of destroying belief in the historical accuracy of the Scriptures as avowed Rationalists. Proof of this is afforded in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, and the latest researches of scholars who remain within the orthodox pale. Bishop Colenso was censured for publishing his exposure of the unhistorical nature of the Pentateuch, but divines have gone far beyond the bishop in recent years. The theory of "special creation" is no longer accepted by the most eminent Churchmen. Parts of Genesis and Leviticus are shown to be the work of exiled Jews, about 500 B.C., and the prophecies of the Book of Daniel are discredited. Respecting Daniel, Canon Farrar states that "even the most conservative theologians are beginning to see that the old positions are untenable." Isaiah and the Book of Joshua are composite documents. The story of the Tower of Babel is fiction.

The New Testament criticism has been equally thorough. Each of the four gospels, originally selected by the Church from the entire number of forty, has received painstaking study. The last sixteen verses of St. Mark are "a dubious appendix to that gospel," and the narrative of the woman taken in adultery in John was not in the original gospel. The genuine epistles of St. Paul are only three in number—to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians,

and they were written before the four canonical gospels. It is not necessary here to cite further instances of the discredit thrown by Christian scholars upon many of the narratives, miracles, incidents, and doctrines of the volume which was formerly accepted as inspired by a divinity in every syllable. It is clear that the mass of orthodox Christians must sooner or later modify their belief in certain vital dogmas of the faith. The insincerity set up by attempts to square the Bible myths with the facts of science is entirely opposed to the principles of the higher conduct of life. Candour and courage are difficult to men who have been reared in the tradition of Lord Chesterfield, that "wise men never say." The New Morality will substitute the dictum that "wise and moral men will never seek to conceal their opinions" for this counsel of dishonesty and cowardice.

CHAPTER VI.

FORECAST

OUR brief survey of the social influence of creeds founded upon the myths and legends of superstitious and credulous writers may have induced some readers to reflect upon the merits of our rational ethics. Many may plead that destructive criticism deprives the orthodox believer of cherished sanctions and consolations. It should be remembered, however, that the term orthodoxy is elastic, and that there is great difference of view between the sects, and among members of the sects, professing orthodox Christianity. The greater part of the modern Higher Criticism is the earnest task of conforming scholars of the Church, many of whom are in agreement with seceders and Rationalists as to the origin of the miraculous fables and the evidences of the unhistorical character of certain books of the Bible. No doubt the investigations of Protestant clergymen into the alleged proofs for inspiration and miracles must result in the subversion of faith respecting time-honoured dogmas. But it is well to recognise that the destruction of belief is not solely the work of those who criticise from an independent standpoint without the camp. Reform is now working within.

There may be sorrow at the loss of illusions, but there is certainly great compensating joy in the discovery of truth. And when the truth is proved

beyond dispute as a finer incentive and firmer basis, we realise a sense of freedom and of security which illusions can never afford. Intense devotion to traditional religious beliefs often fails to supply that peace of mind and assurance of solace which was once universally claimed as the heritage of implicit faith. Many good Christians endure severe inner conflict in their attempts to reconcile the evil, sadness, and injustices of life with belief in an all-wise and loving God. Millions of sensitive pious souls have suffered the agony of doubt concerning the divine equity and mercy that doomed all mankind to an existence of sorrow and sickness in this life, through the single act of disobedience on the part of two human beings. As a matter of fact, the grief of "the regretful confession of thoughtful unbelief," to borrow a sentence from the seventh Bampton Lecture, has been greatly exaggerated. The transitory pain at the rejection of theological error is never so acute as the lifelong sorrow and perplexity that beset multitudes of orthodox believers. In the lives of eminent Rationalists we entirely fail to trace any permanent deep regret for the abandonment of religious creeds. The "thoughtful unbelief" of J. S. Mill, Shelley, George Eliot, Huxley, Darwin, Clifford, Tyndall, Spencer, Bradlaugh, and a host of Rationalists, both illustrious and obscure, has not been accompanied with sadness, but with intellectual and moral invigoration and sustenance. George Eliot, in spite of a strong bias towards piety, only experienced a freedom "akin to laughter" in discarding the miracles of the Bible. Life brings its unavoidable mental anguish to all men. At the grave of a Free-thinker, as at that of a Christian, we observe the same

sad tears for "the loved and lost." But it is foolish to posit the specific sorrow of "thoughtful unbelief," when experience shows that Rationalists are, as a class, certainly, at the very least, as happy as Christians in the mass.

Although part of the labour of reform is necessarily destructive, it cannot be fairly said that the constructive work has been only suggested in our review of the progress of the New Morality. We have proved that reconstruction is proceeding on the new plan, and that the performance so far has been of the highest benefit to the community. Undoubtedly there is still very much to accomplish, both in the arduous exertion of clearing away and of rebuilding. The reform can only be gradual, for the labourers are comparatively few. Moral science lacks those mighty endowments and State pecuniary aids that maintain the security and the prestige of theological philosophy. States continue to stint the expenditure upon learning, the one safeguard for their stability, and to squander millions upon wars and the maintenance of menacing armed forces. Our material progress is remarkable, but our moral advance does not keep pace with the growing wealth and commercial prosperity of the age.

We may in the near future be brought face to face with dissolution. No one can predict with certainty that our nation will continue to occupy its present exalted position. Many thinkers discern marks of decay in the social fabric. If we do not profit by the teaching of science and the lessons of history, we shall degenerate and sink into inferiority. Our hope must lie in the reforms of social science, and not in the faith of a theology which has proved the historic foe

of knowledge and freedom of investigation. It is probable that some of us may live to see the diversion of public money, and of taxes upon agricultural industry, into fresh channels. The disestablishment of the State Church would let free a vast sum of money, which might be still employed in the interest of social morality. And when the teaching of religious and moral principles ceases to be a source of income, or, at any rate, a means of accumulating money, we may look for a weeding out of those teachers who join the Church or the Dissenting ministry merely as earners of a living.

While Protestantism can only maintain its position by a constant process of doctrinal modification, concession to rationalising forces, and a general increase of latitudinarianism, the Roman Catholic Church remains absolute in its authority. There is undoubtedly a "broad" section of the Romish communion, but the system is authoritative and despotic. There is no appeal to individual reason in Romanism. A vast multitude of educated Catholics are ready to accept the Pope's dictum of his own infallibility, and the mass of the people of Southern Europe blindly believe every word that proceeds from the Vatican. In 1864 the Pope denounced present-day civilisation and culture, and proclaimed against the facts of science. It remains to be seen whether this last effort of Papal supremacy is not the bold yet despairing challenge of an ecclesiasticism that discerns the slow and sure undermining of its authority and influence through the spread of scientific thought. The struggle of the future will be between Rationalism and Rome, unless the Catholic Church adopts the Protestant policy of progressive compromise. In that

case the dogma of Papal infallibility will break down, and absolutism will become an obsolete theory.

Whatever may befall the oldest and most powerful of the churches of Christendom, it is safe to say that Protestant Christianity will only hold together as an organised faith by means of politic compromise and diplomacy. The broader culture will hinder many men from subscribing to the articles of faith as laid down by the Church. Those who enter the ranks of the clergy will find it necessary to keep pace with modern thought, in order to entice educated persons to church. There may for a time be a reaction towards evangelicalism; but there is little doubt that the enthusiasm will wane beneath the steady sapping of the new orthodox criticism. Herbert Spencer's forecast as to a decline of belief in the central doctrine of the Atonement in the popular religion of the future, and a modification of the rituals of worship, is proving true. Men will cease to believe that the "Ultimate Cause of things" is angry if He is not continually praised. It is probable that more stress will be laid on the importance of social responsibility and of secular reforms when less effort is directed towards the adulation of the Deity.

The bulk of sectarians in the more influential Non-conformist bodies is composed of independent-thinking men whose "doctrine" is often hard to distinguish from simple Theism. Charles Spurgeon's lament at the "down-grade" tendency of Dissent showed that orthodox conservatism was giving way, even in the more strictly evangelical sects, and since his death a still wider spirit of latitude has permeated the Churches. The tendency towards rationalisation has indeed been rapid during the past twenty years. And

although we may find a few adherents to the crudest forms of religious superstition in most of the sects, the majority of Dissenters are growing "broader" and more tolerant of heterodoxy year by year. Calvinism has still a strong following in Scotland and Wales, but, on the other hand, many Welsh Congregationalists are now of the progressive religious party.

The success of the Independents is chiefly attributable to the fact that very considerable latitude of opinion is allowed within the sect. "I abhor sectarianism. I regard religious bigotry as an unmitigated curse," writes Dr. Joseph Parker. Such is the gist of the authoritative view of the Neo-Christianity. Men are ceasing to heap abuse upon one another for differences in religious opinion; and the fetish-worship of the Bible is declining. The history of Protestant Christianity clearly shows that "orthodoxy" is constantly changing and reconstructing its principles, and that vast numbers of Nonconformists are in the halfway house on the road to pure Rationalism. Many are further along that road, but emotional devotion to the old associations of discarded beliefs causes a faltering in their steps towards the goal. Sects such as the Society of Friends provide a comfortable shelter to a number of semi-Rationalists by a policy of broadness and tolerance. Men who still wish to be considered religious believers, in spite of inner unbelief in the principal dogmas of the pristine faith taught by St. Paul, can nowadays find communion and sympathy in one or another of the reputedly orthodox sects. We can only regard this allegiance to the outward observance of pious custom as a phase of the transitory period through which we are passing.

Meanwhile the New Morality may reckon among

its apostles and disciples the most earnest humanists and sincere thinkers of the present day. Our more esteemed publicists, journalists, poets, and novelists are Rationalists. In every country of Europe the more zealous social and moral reformers are advocates of the new methods of social science, as opposed to the old prescription of faith and the delusive promises of recompense for the ills of society in a world to come. We are beginning to realise that solidarity and the confederation of nations is not altogether Utopian, but an ideal to hope for, and to strive to attain. And in days to come mankind throughout the globe may at length, after stress and sorrow, enjoy that peace and goodwill which is mockingly proclaimed while, throughout Christendom, class wars with class and nation threatens nation.

But endeavour to improve social conditions, and to arouse men to a sense of civic responsibility, must always be thwarted while humanity is taught that the highest morality consists in being "dead to this world." Carried out with absolute consistency, this doctrine has always proved disastrous in its effects upon society. For centuries men wasted their mental power in idle speculations upon futurity, and in estimating their chances of sharing in the delights of a material and garish paradise, while the poor perished at their gates through lack of social reason and the organisation of industry. Vain disputes as to utterly trivial points of doctrine led to long and bloody wars, and wasted the energy of races in constant conflict. Hope of gaining heaven lured men from the duties of this world into the quietism of the hermit's cell and the monastery, while a multitude of remediable evils received no sane and earnest attention.

"He who would gather immortal palms," says Emerson, "must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness." Many are mesmerised by a name, a book, a custom, or a creed, which tradition renders sacrosanct in their view. They do not "explore if it be goodness" that casts its spell upon their minds and holds their emotional veneration. The world has suffered too long from unreflective belief in supernatural authority, in myth, legend, and crude opinion. We hail any signs of the times which bring promise that men are learning the need for testing their beliefs through the investigation of their origin, and an examination of their influence upon the national and individual life.

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